

# Preventing Arson & Vandalism



Crime and Violence Prevention Center • California Attorney General's Office

Arson and vandalism could have devastating financial and emotional effects on a business. Owners and employees need to be on alert. But why is it difficult to deter these crimes? Quite simply, most vandalism, including graffiti and arson attacks, occur at night and on weekends when businesses are vacant.

## What can you do?

Many of the same precautions taken to discourage burglars may also discourage arsonists and vandals. By taking a few preventative steps, you can help curb these crimes against your business.

### Improve general security

- Train employees to secure all doors, windows, skylights – especially entrances on alleys.
- Install and use an alarm system and make sure all employees know how to activate the system.
- Don't allow landscaping to provide camouflage or hiding places.
- Keep your windows visible from the parking lot and street.
- Keep your property well-lighted at night.
- Train employees to be watchful of strangers and immediately report suspicious actions.
- Ask your neighbor to keep watch over your business while you are away.

### Add fire prevention

- Install smoke detectors, automatic and tamper-proof sprinklers and other fire safety equipment.
- Regularly check and replace batteries on smoke detectors.
- Clear your premises of fuel sources such as landscape trimmings, newspapers, leftover paint, old rags and other trash.
- Keep storage and other infrequently visited areas secure.
- Secure flammables in a locked fire-resistant cabinet.
- Dispose of all flammable waste materials as quickly as possible. (Check with local authorities for approved methods of disposal.)
- Establish frequent and regular fire prevention patrols.
- Maintain an efficient emergency plan.
- Educate employees about arson prevention.

### Remember ...

Cooperation between citizens, business owners and government agencies is a key weapon against arson.

- Encourage your employees to report any information that would help in the investigation of arson-suspected fires.
- Support efforts to investigate, apprehend and prosecute arsonists.
- Protect property you own or occupy from would-be arsonists.

If you have information which may help apprehend an arsonist, call your local law enforcement agency immediately.

## **Vandalism prevention**

Most vandalism, including graffiti, occurs in the evenings and on weekends – so set up prevention techniques accordingly.

- Schedule custodial crews at night.
- Provide incentives for reporting vandalism and any information to catch suspects.
- Immediately report acts of vandalism to your local law enforcement agency.
- Repair damage promptly – the sooner you repair vandalism, the less chance there will be more vandalism.

## **Encourage community participation**

Use newspapers, radio and television to mobilize and encourage the community to report acts of vandalism and arson.



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