



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JAMES C. BRAZELTON
District Attorney

Stanislaus County Courthouse
11th and I Streets
Room 200, 2nd Floor
P.O. Box 442, Modesto, CA 95353

(209) 525-5550

FAX: (209) 525-5545

ARSON AWARENESS WEEK NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: May 7, 2002
Re: Arson Awareness Week
May 5 - 11, 2002

For more information contact:
Carol Shipley, Assistant District Attorney
(209) 525-5550

MODESTO, CALIFORNIA

**UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION AND
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ARSON INVESTIGATORS
ANNOUNCE ARSON AWARENESS WEEK**

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) have teamed up to promote arson awareness around the country.

May 5-11, 2002 has been designated National Arson Awareness Week, to raise America's consciousness of this most costly of all fires and the steps that are being taken to combat it. This year's theme is "**Arson is NOT a victimless crime.**"

The USFA and the IAAI would like to educate the public on arson and also to get them involved in how they can help by reporting suspicious activities, seeking help for children involved in fire setting and reducing fire setting opportunities.

Each year there are over 500 civilian lives lost to arson fires. The property damaged from intentionally set fires is almost 2 billion dollars.

ARSON FACTS

- An estimated 75,000 structure fires were deliberately set or suspected of having been deliberately set, an increase of 4.2% from a year ago.
- 46,500 vehicle fires of incendiary or suspicious origin occurred, an increase of 3.3% from a year ago, and caused \$186,000,000 in property damage.
- The American Red Cross reported 76,276 families were displaced due to fire in 2000. This accounts for 60% of all families assisted during the year.
- In 2000, a total of 102 firefighters were killed while on duty.

Steps that can be taken to reduce the incidents of arson:

- If you know or suspect that an arson crime has been committed, contract your local fire or police department.
- If you suspect a child is setting fires notify the proper authorities, it may not be "just a phase" they are going through. Keep matches and lighters out of reach and out of sight of young children.
- Report suspicious activity near houses or other buildings to the local police and support Neighborhood Watch programs.
- Keep leaves, firewood, overgrown brush and shrubbery and other combustibles away from buildings. Most arson fires are started outdoors. Don't make it easy for an arsonist to start a fire or easy for an outdoor fire to spread to a building.
- Keep doors and windows locked when a building is unoccupied. But don't use double cylinder deadbolt locks without keeping a key nearby, bars without quick release mechanisms, or other security provisions that could trap a person in a building with a deadly fire.

Remember: **Arson is NOT a Victimless Crime!**

For additional information on arson prevention, call the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc. (314) 739-4224 or your local fire department.

The Stanislaus County Arson Task Force has requested the Board of Supervisors, Modesto City Council and other cities to proclaim the week of May 6 - 11 as Arson Awareness Week. The Arson Task Force operates under a joint powers agreement with both fire, law enforcement and the District Attorney participating. There were 522 arson fires in Stanislaus County in 2001. The breakdown per city was:

Cities	Arson	Property Loss
Ceres	34	\$ 383,000
Modesto	69	\$ 296,113
Newman	0	\$ 0
Oakdale	10	Unknown
Patterson	14	\$ 60,000
Salida	16	\$ 117,050
Turlock	52	\$ 77,231
County	327	\$4,050,725

(includes Hughson, Waterford, Riverbank)

If your business group or community organization would like to have someone speak, free of charge, at an upcoming function on the arson problem and what's being done, contact Carol Shipley, Assistant District Attorney, 525-5558.