

## **\*\*\* Important Arson Prevention Information \*\*\***

In the wake of the recent Alabama church arsons, GuideOne Insurance encourages you to take the following precautions in order to further safeguard your ministry. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of the church families that have been impacted by these tragic events. We remain committed to putting an end to these horrible acts by working with local authorities, offering a \$15,000 reward for any information that leads to an arson conviction related to our customers, and helping all area churches proactively protect themselves from becoming future crime targets.

### **Arson Prevention**

Arson is the leading cause of commercial building fires, with over 37,500 structure fires intentionally set in the United States each year. The mental and emotional loss of a church building due to arson can be as great as the physical damage itself. For churches insured by GuideOne, the average damage incurred in arson incidents exceeded \$450,000 in 2005.

Your facility can decrease the chances that an arsonist will strike by undertaking an arson and crime prevention program. This fact sheet provides information on why churches and religious organizations are vulnerable to arson and what they can do to protect themselves from this crime:

### **Why Churches and Religious Organizations Are Vulnerable:**

- Buildings are often unoccupied.
- Activity schedules are predictable.
- Security systems are often lacking.
- Arsonists, vandals, and other criminals often target churches because of their beliefs.

### **To Reduce the Risk of Arson:**

#### **Building Exterior:**

- Illuminate exterior buildings, doors and parking lots from sunset to sunrise.
- Consider the installation of motion-activated lighting near doors and windows.
- Keep doors and windows locked when the building is unoccupied.
- Trim shrubs and trees around windows and doors to eliminate potential hiding places for arsonists and criminals.
- Keep track of and limit the disbursement of building keys.
- Make sure that doors are of solid core (not hollow) construction and are outfitted with quality deadbolt locks and, if hinged on the outside, tamper-proof hinges.
- Utilize wire-mesh glass in windows for additional protection from break-ins.
- Ladders and tools should not be stored outside the building at the end of the day.
- Keep the property free from trash and other potentially combustible debris.
- Consider installing video security cameras at entrances and other key areas.
- Park church vehicles in differing locations on the property throughout the week to vary routine.

#### **Building Interior:**

- Leave interior entry lights on overnight.
- Make sure that flammable liquids are stored in a locked closet or cabinet away from any heat sources, such as heating or air conditioning equipment.
- If possible, install a central station monitored security/fire detection system and sprinkler fire suppression system.
- Consider the use of timers for lights and/or radios during evening hours.
- Look for items that appear out of place or out of the ordinary.

#### **General Precautions:**

- Ask neighbors to alert police if anything suspicious is seen on church property.
- Develop positive relationships with local law enforcement and invite them to patrol the property during the overnight hours.
- Establish a "Church Watch" program in which members volunteer to drive through the property at various times throughout the week.

### **Five Keys to Arson Prevention**

1. Lock-up
2. Lighting
3. Landscaping
4. Lookout
5. Law Enforcement



*For additional church safety information, please visit [www.georgia-churchinsurance.com](http://www.georgia-churchinsurance.com) or call 770-466-1000*