

Checklist for church properties to reduce the risk of an arson attack

Arson poses a significant threat to your church and church hall. It is the most common cause of large fire losses and a major security challenge for church communities and churches are often viewed as a soft target.

The following checklist will help you review the arson risk and guide you through simple steps to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of arson.

- Have you reviewed your church security arrangements? Are adequate measures in place to protect vulnerable areas against unauthorised access?
- Have you spoken to your neighbours? Encourage people living near the church to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity immediately to the Police.
- Good housekeeping is vital -
 - Do not accumulate rubbish and combustible waste in or around the church.
 - Candles and matches should be locked away.
 - Do not leave petrol in the church.
 - Do not leave bales of hay/straw for the Christmas crib in the church all year.
 - Boiler houses should be locked with no combustible waste stored in them.
- Are your bins close to the church or church buildings? Locate bins in secure areas well away from buildings if possible. A fire in a waste bin close to the church can quickly spread to the building.
- Do you carry out repairs quickly if you suffer from graffiti or malicious damage attacks? Minor damage is often followed by more serious incidents including arson if not addressed quickly.

Liaise with our Claims Department on 0345 606 1331 before undertaking repairs of this type.

- Is your church securely locked overnight?
Make sure the church is locked overnight including any perimeter gates. Arson risks significantly increase during the hours of darkness.
- Church halls should be locked when not in use.
- Are doors and accessible windows adequately secured to prevent unauthorised access?
- Have you limited authorised entry points, other than for services?
Leave only one door unlocked during the day. This should be easily visible from nearby properties.
- Create the impression the building is visited regularly. Encourage members of the church and neighbours to visit as part of their daily routine.
- Use the church as much as possible. If practical have a rota of church sitters.
- Keep internal doors closed to prevent fire spreading.
- Have you considered installing external security lighting and intruder alarms, or closed circuit television to help deter criminals?
Fire and intruder alarms should be remote signalling to an receiving centre to ensure a 24 hour response to any activations to help mitigate losses as far as possible.
- Make sure fire extinguishers are maintained annually and church officials have been trained in their use.

You can find a whole range of resources to help keep your church running smoothly, in the church guidance and resources section of our website, from risk assessment forms you can download and fill in to best practice guidance for events, health and safety and fire safety.

www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

**For further information please contact our customer services team on
0345 606 1331.**