



SECURITY AND ARSON

The prevention and control of deliberate fires should be one of the principal responsibility of security personnel, notwithstanding the fact that large firms, quite rightly, employ their own specialist fire officers. Medium-sized and small firms often make fire prevention a dual responsibility for the chief security officer and this tendency seems likely to become universal. It therefore follows that security staff should have a working knowledge of fire prevention and protection.

Because fires do not occur often it is all too easy to regard this as a relatively minor aspect of the security officers' or guards' duties. Fire, however, is the biggest single threat to any premises and should receive the attention which it warrants in relation to security operations.

Malicious ignition

The incidence of deliberate fires is increasing dramatically in all countries annually, and South Africa is no exception.

Attention to the following points can help to minimise the risk of deliberate fires on your premises:

- Provide sprinklers wherever they are needed.
- Lock sprinkler control valves in the open position.
- Control access by visitors and accompany them in your plant. This will assist in recognising intruders.
- Review entrance points regularly. A check of security fences, doors, windows, locks, skylights and gates could be done monthly and more frequently during strikes.
- Control flammable liquid strictly. Remove them from the building every day and lock them up in an approved store.
- Maintain good housekeeping. Industrial waste and rubbish is the most common material first ignited in a fire.
- Spot-check normally unattended areas, avoiding a predictable patrol pattern.
- Proper selection and screening of employees.
- Promote good employer-staff relationships.
- Railway trucks and vehicles should not be parked adjacent to building walls unless the walls are of blank masonry construction.
- Remain alert after a suspicious fire. Remember, arsonists will often try again.



Reporting and investigating

After a fire has occurred it becomes very necessary to thoroughly investigate the incident to ensure that the cause of the fire is established so that steps can be taken to avoid its recurrence. The security department can assist in compiling a comprehensive report as soon as possible while memories are fresh and irrespective of whether the incident might cause embarrassment to particular individuals or departments.

To ensure that details are not overlooked this report could be based on a printed form which should at least include the following items:

- Time, date and area of outbreak
- Person who discovered fire and how discovered **ie:** personal observation or automatic alarm
- Precise location of fire.
- Time and date area last seen in order, and by whom.
- Time of notification, arrival and departure of the fire brigade.
- Identification of the fire officer in charge and details of how to contact him.
- Brigades' observations on their arrival at the scene.
- Cause of the fire.
- Times that senior personnel were notified of outbreak.
- Fire equipment used that needs replenishing.
- Details of injuries sustained.
- General description of fire, including damage to building and contents.
- Time and date of notification to insurance company.
- Appreciation of effect of the fire on production.
- Requirements and recommendations to prevent a recurrence.



Precautions during inactive periods

During inactive or idle periods reliance on outside assistance in time of an emergency will increase. It is vital that you notify your local authority fire brigade, your insurance company and the police that your plant will be shut for a few days

With operations shut down your security service takes an added importance since few, if any, personnel will be present to discover a fire or any other problems at their outset.

A number of factors must be considered as to whether a watch service would be adequate and how often rounds should be made.

- Is construction combustible?
- Is the building completely vacated or still occupied by production equipment and for storage?
- What is the neighbourhood like as far as the probability of vandalism and incendiarism are concerned?
- Is the property exposed by adjacent buildings?
- Is sprinkler protection provided where needed?
- Is there any protective equipment requiring manual operation?

Where all conditions are favourable and exposed values are low, or where operations continue on a reduced scale, a check of the property once a day can be adequate. As values exposed to loss increase and/or protection deficiencies exist, round the clock recorded rounds will be needed. Where operations continue on a reduced scale with some areas idle, a guard may check the idle areas only. Hourly rounds are recommended during periods of labour unrest.

Inspection of the sprinkler system can be considered the guard's single most important duty. Where limited operations continued, make sure someone continues inspections of fire protection equipment.

This attempt of an arsonist to burn down a clothing factory failed. A length of cloth soaked in paraffin (container arrowed) leads from a pile of collapsed cardboard cartons (1) through the doorway (2), to the office (3), and terminated on a cutting table (4)

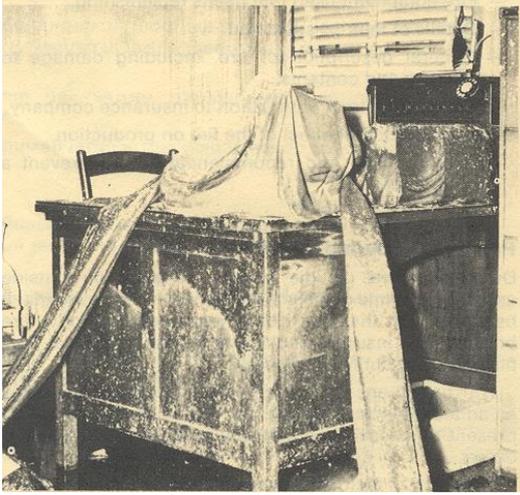


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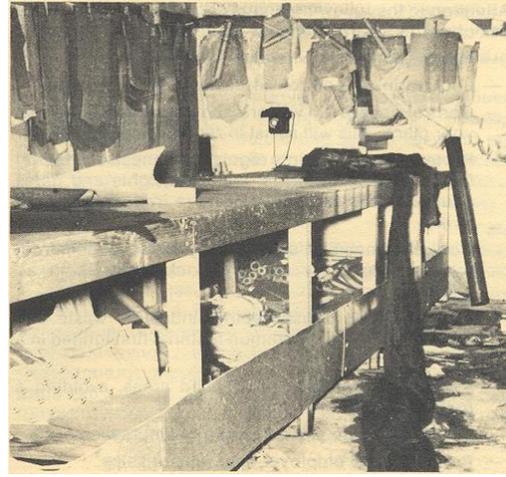


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Published by

Fire Protection Association of Southern Africa

(Incorporated Association not for Gain)

(Reg.No. 73/00022/08)

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