

# THE INSURANCE ADVISOR

For America's Churches and Related Ministries from Brotherhood Mutual and Its Agents

## TAKE STEPS TO PROTECT YOUR CHURCH FROM ARSON

ISSUE 22—HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOUR MINISTRY?

*There is no typical church arsonist. Fires are set to conceal burglaries, to retaliate for church/school offenses, or simply for the thrill of vandalizing property.*

**A** church fire is a tragic event no matter the circumstance, but when arson is the cause, congregations feel especially victimized.

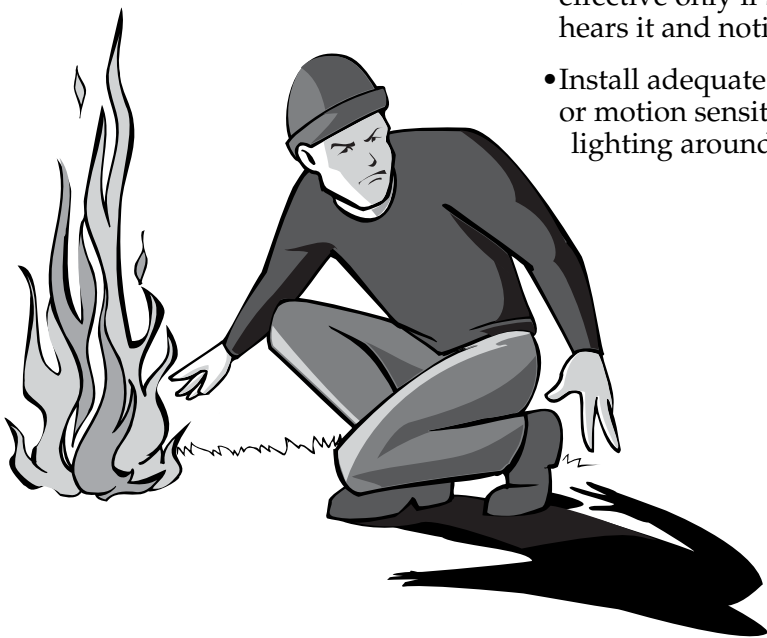
You can reduce the threat of arson by following these steps:

### PREVENTION MEASURES

- Install central station fire and burglar alarm systems. A central station alarm alerts a manned security station, resulting in deployment of law and fire enforcement officials. In contrast, a local alarm system sounds at the premises, making it effective only if someone hears it and notifies police.
- Install adequate dawn-to-dusk or motion sensitive exterior lighting around the building.

Pay particular attention to entrances. Mount fixtures out of reach of people who might disable the lights to avoid detection.

- Whenever possible, landscape buildings to eliminate hiding areas close to the building. This is most important near windows and doors that provide points of access to the building. Keep shrubbery and trees trimmed so the building can be observed by passing patrols.
- Secure windows, basement entries, and external stairways.
- Be alert to and monitor individuals who may be disgruntled and likely to retaliate by damaging church property.
- Ask local police to patrol your property as often as possible during the night hours. You might also ask local law and fire enforcement officials to inspect your premises and give advice on how to thoroughly secure your building.
- Ask church members to take a more active role in protecting the property. For example, members who work late shifts could drive by the church on their way home and simply do a perimeter check of the property from their vehicle.



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*Knowing what to do in the event a crime is committed at your church can help keep you and your members safe.*

- Enlist the support of the neighborhood. Perhaps you, as a local church, could sponsor a neighborhood watch program to benefit everyone in the area.
- Coordinate any details concerning a watch program with local law enforcement. Do not allow participants to confront strangers or carry firearms. Report all suspicious activity to the police.
- Compile a list of individuals who have access to church keys. Limit the number of people on the list and recalibrate locks if any keys are lost or stolen.
- Keep all flammable liquids in approved containers and secured under lock and key.

## WHAT TO DO IF A CRIME OCCURS

Knowing what to do in the event a crime is committed at your church can help keep you and your members safe.

### STEPS TO TAKE:

- Call the police if you notice suspicious persons or activities around your church or if you discover a crime has been committed. (Do not deal with the criminal(s) yourself.)
- Observe carefully. If you witness a crime, try to remember the details such as the description of the suspect, including sex, height, build, color of skin, hair, and eyes; age; voice or speech; scars or tattoos; jewelry; and clothing.
- If you discover vandalism or theft has occurred, make a list of all missing or damaged property. (Ask your agent about obtaining a Personal Property Inventory booklet. This will help you to document serial numbers, model descriptions, and purchase prices prior to an incident of fire or theft.)
- Don't disturb the crime scene.
- Notify your insurance agent as soon as possible. This will enable you to verify available insurance as well as to receive a fast, fair settlement.

## Louis Blossch Insurance Agency

We insure over 300 churches in North East Oklahoma. We offer this information to help you better administer your church business. The less time you spend on problems which arise from a claim is more time you

can spend spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

Our team professionals are Louis Blossch, Jerry Hendon, Chuck Lewis, Guy Landes and Clayton Haggard.



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