

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE _____

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NATIONAL ARSON AWARENESS WEEK

SUFFOLK, VA (May 5, 2021) Suffolk Fire & Rescue would like to inform citizens that “National Arson Awareness Week” is recognized from May 2nd through May 8, 2021, and is designed to help reduce the frequency and suffering caused by this serious crime.

This year’s theme, set by the U.S. Fire Administration, is, “Arson During Civil Unrest — An Unjustifiable Crime”, and the recognition highlights critical actions that first responders must take to help ensure a safe response to arson fires during civil unrest incidents across the Nation.

The dangers involved during a civil unrest incident put everyone's life in peril. Innocent bystanders, occupants, first responders, and those committing these acts all have a chance to receive debilitating injuries or worse. The aftermath of these intentional acts can create a devastating fiscal loss for communities.

We are fortunate that this year’s theme of civil unrest doesn’t reflect the relationships that Suffolk citizens have with our first responders, and that we live in a community where residents can feel free to disagree, without being disagreeable or resorting to senseless acts of violence and arson. In this spirit of

community, Suffolk Fire & Rescue provides the following informative and helpful general fire prevention safety information, in addition to ways we all can help reduce the risk of arson:

- Keep your home safe by regularly inspecting it for fire hazards, having working smoke alarms on every level, and inside and outside all sleeping areas. Keep your family safe by planning and practicing your home fire escape plan.
- Keep combustibles including leaves, firewood, overgrown brush and shrubbery away from buildings.
- Keep doors and windows locked when a building is unoccupied. Board up abandoned buildings. Do not 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.
- Report suspicious activity near houses or other buildings to the Suffolk Police Department.
- Store all flammable liquids such as; paints, gasoline, and mowers in an approved storage location: locked cabinets, locked storage units, and locked garages (prevent access to kids). Also, keep flammable liquids away from heat sources such as furnaces and any type of heaters.
- Keep matches and lighters out of the reach and out of sight of young children. Teach your child that fire is dangerous. Even small fires can spread very quickly. Fire is a tool, not a toy, and must only be used by adults. If you suspect a child is setting fires, notify the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Fire Prevention Bureau so that trained officials can provide educational and intervention assistance before potential life-threatening problems occur.
- If you know or suspect that an arson crime has been committed, contact Suffolk Fire & Rescue and the Suffolk Police Department.

“Arson is a serious problem and crime that not only causes damage to property and costs people their lives across our nation daily, but also

needlessly puts firefighters in danger. Every citizen can play a role in helping to combat this crime by reporting suspicious persons and activities that may result in arson.”, said Battalion Chief Chris Cornwell, Fire Marshal.

For more information on fire safety, please contact the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department at 757-514-4550, or email fireprevbureau@suffolkva.us.

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