

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE _____

April 27, 2016



Contact:

Diana L. Klink
757.514.4104
757.359.1845

Tim Kelley
757.514.4103
757.871.3039

2016 ARSON AWARENESS WEEK – PREVENT WILDFIRE ARSON – SPREAD THE FACTS NOT THE FIRE

SUFFOLK, VA (April 27, 2016) The Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department, U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and its partners will use the week of May 1st thru May 7, 2016 to focus attention on wildfire arson. Arson and other human-caused wildland fires pose a serious threat to lives, property, and natural resources. Conditions are predictably precarious in areas where homes intermingle with forests and grasslands. The National Association of State Foresters cites more than 72,000 U.S. communities are now at risk from wildfire.

During the five-year period 2010-2014, 23 percent of wildfires reported were arson. Annually, more than half a million wildfires are set by arsonists resulting in over \$3 billion in damages.

Arson is the willful, malicious, intentional and/or reckless burning of someone else's, or one's own, property. Wildfire arson takes place on wildland which is undeveloped or

uncultivated land comprised of forest, brush or grassland. Not all wildland is comprised of forests. In many places, the wildland is grassy plains resulting in the evolution of the term forest fire to the more accurate wildfire. Even Smokey Bear adjusted. In 2001, his catch phrase was changed from “Remember... Only YOU Can Prevent Forest Fires” to “Only You Can Prevent Wildfires” in response to a massive outbreak of wildfires in natural areas other than forests.

Whether referred to as grass fires, forest fires, wildland fires, or a variety of other names, these fires pose an evolving threat to lives and property in an increasing number of communities across the United States.

The Suffolk Fire Marshal’s Office offers the following fire safety tips:

- Install a residential fire sprinkler system in your home – working smoke alarms and fire sprinklers reduces the likelihood of dying in a fire by more than 82 percent.
- Use fire-resistant materials when building, renovating, or retrofitting structures.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, particularly near and in sleeping areas.
- Create a safety zone or defensible space to separate the home from combustible plants and vegetation.
- “If You See Something, Say Something™” It takes a community to protect a community. Informed, alert communities play a critical role in keeping our nation safe. Report unfamiliar vehicles to local law enforcement.
- Be Prepared – Build a disaster emergency kit.
- Make evacuation plans from your home and from work and plan several routes in case the fire blocks an escape route.

For more information on National Arson Awareness Week, visit www.usfa.fema.gov/aaw.

###