



The latest report from the Arson Prevention Forum has warned that while the number of deliberately started fires and associated fatalities have fallen over a 10-year period, they still account for 45% of all fires attended.

The 'Arson: State of the Nation' report highlights the impact that the 628,900 annual incidents of arson to society in the UK including the annual £1bn cost to members of the Association of British Insurers because accidental fires continue to fall at a much more significant rate than the deliberate fires.

Commenting on the report, recent QFSM recipient Lee Howell, the Independent Chairman of the Arson Prevention Forum, said: "Whilst deliberate fires, like accidental fires, are decreasing – the number of deliberate fires and associated deaths and injuries are all down over a ten year period – accidental fires are falling at a much more significant rate. Whilst the number of deliberate fires is reducing, the cost to business, the government, the public and the insurance industry is not.

"This clearly emphasises that more needs to be done. Collaboration is the key. Working together to improve the effectiveness of prevention, protection, investigation and diversion activities will help reduce the incidence of fires and the associated cost.

"Deliberate fires not only endanger life, but also cost a vast amount of money. The Association of British Insurers state that their insurers pay out over £1bn in fire related claims each year and the larger loss fires are in non-domestic buildings. At the same time, the damage to property, business interruption and inconvenience arson causes is significant. The approach towards arson reduction is not as joined up as it could be, and the level of investment directed towards tackling arson is limited, to say the least."

Challenge current arson reduction activities

The report aims to challenge stakeholders to not only consider the effectiveness of their current arson reduction activities, but also to explore what more might be done to drive down the number of arson incidents and the associated costs and societal impacts of arson.

When investigating what is currently taking place to combat arson, a range of examples of fire and rescue services' work were

highlighted by the APF, some of which involved the police and other agencies but examples of the work of other partners were harder to come by. The report concludes that there is a need for all the various agencies with a responsibility and interest in arson to work better together; pooling resources and funding as well as expertise and knowledge.

It is recommended that:

- The insurance industry play a leading role in arson reduction interventions, working with police and fire and rescue services and use partnerships with other agencies
- The insurance industry commissions research to enable a better understanding of the risks and collating good practice with respect to arson reduction arrangements
- The RISC Authority, working with the Association of British Insurers, should ensure that data required to inform the scale of the problem is presented - specifically, a figure for the cost of arson as this is currently not separately recorded from the total cost of fire
- The insurance industry to consider the role sprinklers may play as a means of protecting properties and reducing the impact of arson.
- The Arson Prevention Forum should continue to coordinate learning from local arson reduction programmes and the Crown Prosecution Service should share lessons learnt from successful and unsuccessful prosecutions.
- Discussions should be encouraged at Central Government level to enable greater emphasis and awareness on arson reduction arrangements.

The Arson Prevention Forum, supported by the effective engagement and contribution from the ABI, FPA as well as Zurich and AXA, will coordinate improvements and a report was presented to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Insurance and Financial Services in January.

Richard Hook
Fire magazine, Pavillion Publishing and Media

Guide for fire systems in flat conversions

The FIA has published a 'Guide to fire detection and fire alarms in houses converted to flats'.

It is a general discussion document that examines existing guidance on the issue and outlines some of the problems and pitfalls in regard to selecting fire systems in buildings that are converted to flats. It does not give specific advice but explores some of the difficulties experienced by specifiers and contractors.

Download the document at www.fia.uk.com



Latest regulation tackles cable entanglement deaths

A new regulation is to be brought in, to tackle fatalities caused by cable entanglement. Over the past 10 years, firefighters have lost their lives during service, with cable entanglement being said to have played a part in their deaths.

The most recent case – the deaths of two firefighters in the Shirley Towers blaze, was said to have been contributed by fallen cables trapping Jim Shears and Alan Bannon, as the supports originally holding the cables in place had melted in the heat. The Coroner's Rule 43, relating to the Shirley Towers incident highlights how "all FRs should consider the implementation of measures to reduce the risks associated with fallen cables".



The new addition to the Wiring Regulations 7671 has been published as a result of lobbying from both UK Fire & Rescue Services and the charity Electrical Safety First. As of January 1st 2015, new wiring systems are required to use metal support rather than plastic. This will prevent the systems from melting prematurely, thus causing escape routes to be unnecessarily blocked. This addition to the regulation will apply only to cables within escape routes that are fixed to walls or ceilings.

Fallen cables were also highlighted as a factor in the deaths of firefighters Michael Millar and Jeff Wornham in February 2005.

It is hoped that the addition to Wiring Regulations 7671 will prevent tragedies such as the one in Shirley Towers, from happening again.

Agrippa wire-free fire door holders have been installed at one of Birmingham's largest schools.

Allowing fire doors to be held open – invaluable in busy school corridors – the product automatically closes the door in the event of a fire alarm signal.

Fairfax Academy in Sutton Coalfield, which has more than 1400 students and 270 sixth formers, required a solution that balanced access with safety.

Agrippa's door holders use Geofire's wire-free technology.

The school's facilities manager, Brian Fox, recognises that fire doors can be an irksome barrier to the progress of hundreds of students going from classroom to classroom – particularly wheelchair users and people with restricted mobility.

"The Agrippa fire door holders have proved to be the perfect solution – compact, easy to fit and programme," says Fox. "Additionally, their 'learning' of the specific fire alarm means that they work perfectly with our alarm bells and there have been no false closures due to any loud noises."

Geofire's advanced digital technology enables the Agrippa door holders to uniquely 'listen and learn' the sound of a specific fire alarm. This ensures the holder's releasing trigger reacts only to the precise sound of the fire alarm rather than extraneous loud noises, so false activations are virtually eliminated.

As it's installed at the top of the fire door, the Agrippa holder does not cause damage to flooring. Its unique learning function optimises settings to suit the installed position, and it can be programmed for timed daily releases. It requires only two C cell batteries (which last for 12 months), has battery life indication and low battery warning. It is approved to EN1155 and CE Marked.

The holder is part of the Agrippa Acoustic Products Range that includes an acoustically triggered fire door closer. UK manufacturer Geofire specialise in the manufacture of a wide range of electromagnetic door holders and other activation devices used widely as part of fire, security or ventilation systems.

For more information go to www.mechlite.co.uk

Fire doors the benefits are plain to see

When a fire ripped through the creative arts block at a Dorset school it was a blessed relief that the fire-safety professionals had done their job properly.

Pictures recently released by Dorset Fire & Rescue Service demonstrate starkly the benefits of fire doors in slowing the spread of fire, restricting damage and – most importantly of all – giving people more time to evacuate.

Many readers will have seen these benefits play out under test conditions – during last year's live fire door test by the British Woodworking Federation for



example. But it's rare as it is helpful to see the benefits in a real-life scenario too.

The fire, which began on the roof, fortunately occurred during school holidays. It had been burning for more than an hour before a 999 call was made. By the time fire engines arrived it was impossible for firefighters to get near it so the blaze remained un-suppressed for several more hours – and still, the fire doors stood firm, as the pictures clearly demonstrate.

"We took photos in the aftermath of this school fire, which clearly show the value of fire doors," says Andy Fox, head of fire safety at Dorset Fire & Rescue Service. "It's usually difficult to describe just how important they are but these pictures need no description and show exactly how effective correctly installed and maintained fire doors can be."

Says Neil Ashdown, general manager of

the Fire Door Inspection Scheme: "These images show just how important it is to ensure that the people responsible for fire-door installation and maintenance are aware of the faults we see.

"From gaps between doors and frames and unsuitable hinges to incorrectly fitted or missing seals, the problems are all too common. It is crucial that before a fire occurs these issues are addressed and an effective inspection regime is in place so that all fire doors can work as well as these."

For more information about maintaining fire doors go to www.fdis.co.uk

