



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Arson Awareness Week (May 6-12) **Reducing Arson at Vacant and Abandoned Buildings**

Every year during the first full week of May is Arson Awareness Week. This year the theme is “Reducing Arson at Vacant and Abandoned Buildings”. Vacant and abandoned building fires are more likely to be intentionally set and they cause a disproportionate share of firefighter injuries. According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) about 23,800 vacant residential building fires are reported each year and cause an estimated 75 deaths, 200 injuries and \$758 million in property loss. Vacant and abandoned buildings have a negative impact on a community’s image. Their presence may result in an increase of criminal activity.

“Abandoned and vacant structures that are unsecured and exposed to the elements present a clear and present danger to both the community and first responders,” stated Fire Marshal Mike Horton. “These structures can be extremely treacherous to firefighters, as they lack structural integrity and may contain other hazards.”

San Bernardino County Fire maintains a strict board up policy and procedure working with local code enforcement and building officials. When fires occur in vacant buildings, first responders work closely with these agencies to prevent future trespassing and additional fires. Responsible citizens identifying or recognizing abandoned buildings should remain vigilant of trespassing and criminal activity that could pose a criminal risk to the neighborhood. San Bernardino County Fire has conducted several investigations that have resulted in recent criminal arson convictions. San Bernardino County Fire remains dedicated to the prevention of arson and the safety of our citizens and the protection of all property. Fire Marshal Horton encourages everyone to maintain their property to help prevent arson.

How to reduce arson at vacant/abandoned buildings:

- Secure abandoned and vacant homes by using additional locks and/or by boarding up broken windows, doors.
- Remove all garbage, material and excess vegetation capable of being ignited.
- Remove all possible sources of ignition, such as flammable liquids and unused gas containers.

By using these tips, you can help prevent arson and keep criminal activity down. San Bernardino County Fire reminds you “if you see something, say something”. Callers wishing to remain anonymous are urged to call the We-tip Hotline at (800) 47-ARSON (800-472-7766) or by visiting www.wetip.com.

Each time an arsonist sets a fire, firefighters lives are put at risk. Arson fires also result in millions of dollars of damage to wildland, structures and natural resources.

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