

Arson Risk Reduction

Preserving Life and Heritage in the North West



In partnership with
Historic England



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NFCC fully endorse this Arson Risk Reduction guidance to all Fire & Rescue Services and anyone responsible for managing heritage sites.

Front and back Cover: Devastating fire at Maple mill, Oldham, December 2016
 © Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue

Welcome

Historic England North West is pleased to be working in partnership with our region's Fire and Rescue Services to help property owners take preventative measures against arson.

Historic buildings are irreplaceable. Fires can wreak havoc in a matter of minutes, damaging historic fabric, causing a building's economic value to plummet and harming part of the nation's shared cultural resource.

This guide is designed to help you identify threats and take steps to make your property less of a target for arson. It will help you to react quickly in the event of a fire, ensuring that as much as possible of your building and its contents are saved.

Over the past year, Historic England has seen a worrying rise in the number of fires at historic properties. Those that are vacant are disproportionately affected. We estimate that over half of the useable buildings on Historic England's North West Heritage at Risk Register could become targets for arson because they are vacant. Many more are susceptible because they are only in partial occupation.

There are lots of other special buildings that are vulnerable to fire but outside the scope of our Heritage at Risk Register. The North West is home to thousands of buildings that enhance the character of their local area but are not protected as listed buildings, nor listed at the highest grades. Recently, arsonists have damaged or destroyed several North West mills. Other empty and much-loved historic buildings, such as Accrington Conservative Club and the derelict Monks Hall Museum in Eccles, Salford, have also been victims.

Manchester's Grade II* listed timber-framed Wythenshawe Hall dates to the Tudor period and suffered a devastating arson attack in March 2016. Thankfully, the Fire and Rescue Service responded swiftly and conservation experts are salvaging many of the building's ornate details and decorative timber carvings so it can continue to be enjoyed by this and future generations. The Georgian Daresbury Hall in Cheshire caught ablaze in June 2016. Again, the Fire and Rescue Services acted promptly, but the expense of repairs will be

considerable. Both buildings are on the Heritage at Risk Register, and we are working with the owners in the aftermath of the fires.

This guide provides advice on how to reduce the risk of arson and to safeguard life. We hope you will use it to consider how safe your property is, and how you can prioritise actions to help it stand up to the threat. Today's derelict buildings may become the centrepieces of the future regeneration of our cities, towns and villages. Safeguarding them now will allow them to fulfil their social, cultural and economic potential.



Charles Smith,
Principal Adviser,
Heritage at Risk,
Historic England NW

Arson in the North West

Arson is the criminal act of deliberately setting fire to property. In any situation, the effects can be catastrophic. In the case of historic buildings, the effects are often compounded due to the immediate loss of cultural, social and artistic heritage. In the longer term, the detrimental effect upon the character and appearance of streets or places can be equally damaging. This can result in a lasting negative impact on communities.

Arson is a very significant cause of fire within industrial, warehousing and commercial buildings, all of which can become targets. Public perception may be that insurers will pay to restore the loss caused by arson, but the consequences go far beyond the financial, they can also involve:

- Death and injury to staff, visitors and fire fighters
- Permanent loss of business (two thirds of businesses that experience a fire never recover)
- Loss of jobs and community resources
- Environmental pollution including air pollution by smoke
- Permanent loss of our heritage
- Damage to local distinctiveness and civic pride

Most people think about fire safety in terms of accidental fires, but few consider the potential for arson. This means that many properties are significantly more vulnerable than they could otherwise be.

The grand Grade II listed Conservative Club in Accrington, Lancashire used to be at the heart of the town's social scene, and a local architectural gem. Its ballroom hosted parties for up to 1000 people. It fell in to disuse and decline in the early 2000s, becoming derelict and a target for antisocial behaviour, including a fire in 2012. During the night in May 2016 an enormous fire took hold, causing the roof to collapse through the top floor. The upper storeys of the building have had to be demolished, leaving it a shadow of its former self, and a huge loss for Accrington. Police are treating the incident as suspicious. © Lancashire Fire and Rescue

How arson takes hold

There is a link between deliberate small fires set within 50m of buildings and fires affecting whole buildings. Deliberate fire setting frequently escalates from fires in bags of rubbish or bins to larger fires involving waste materials, vehicles, sheds and outbuildings, before finally larger buildings catch alight. In some cases, this is because the 'aspirations' of the arsonist steadily increase; in others the perpetrator set what they believed would be a small fire only to see it 'run away' and engulf the whole property. Owners, building managers, trustees etc should be vigilant and aware of any small fires occurring nearby.

Arson often causes more damage than accidental fires due to:

- Multiple points of ignition
- Fire growth being assisted by flammable liquids or accelerants
- Fires being lit at vulnerable points in buildings after dark
- Perpetrators deliberately interfering with fire protection measures

Who commits arson and why?

There are many potential drivers for arson. Motives are commonly linked to the issues set out below.

Criminal acts

Arson is commonly linked to criminal damage, financial gain, opportunist vandalism and petty crime. It may be associated with attempts to conceal or destroy evidence of crimes such as burglary or sabotage of equipment. Young people feature heavily in arson attacks. Statistics reveal that the majority of people cautioned or arrested for arson are male and aged between 10 and 14. Normally, there is very little motivation or intent and usually a complete failure to understand the potential consequences of their actions.

Grievances

Grievances can result from conflict with staff/volunteers and are typically associated with termination of contract, relocation, loss of earnings or advancement, revenge or personal animosity. Disputes with contractors and even neighbours have also been causes of arson.

Mental health

Some forms of mental or psychological illness are associated with fire-setting, linked to a desire to attract attention. 'Would be heroes' may light fires in order to be able to 'discover' them and subsequently assist in the rescue and fire fighting operations.

Financial gain

Police and insurance company investigations frequently uncover motivations from people who stood to benefit financially from insurance or from releasing new development land. Sometimes only certain parts of buildings are targeted in such cases, for example financial records or out of date stock.

The Grade I listed St Mary Holme Cultram Abbey, West Cumbria was founded in 1150 by Cistercian monks. It was gutted as a result of an arson attack in 2006. A teenager was sentenced to four years in prison. He admitted to stealing £5 from the collection box to buy alcohol, then returning and setting fire to garments in the vestry. It reopened in late 2015, following 9 years of repair costing over £2million.

© Cumbria Fire and Rescue



Protecting your property from arson

Raising awareness

There are some very simple measures which can be taken to dramatically reduce the chances of an arson attack. Awareness of the risk is key. Owners and building managers must be aware that 'arson could happen to us' rather than thinking that 'fire is something that happens to other people'. Effective arson risk reduction involves everyone who lives, works or volunteers within a building and its grounds.

Arson Risk Assessments

Arson risk assessments highlight fire risks and provide management procedures to prevent deliberate fires.

To reduce the likelihood and effects of arson, you should systematically assess your building from the perspective of potential arsonists. This involves walking round the inside and outside of the building, and deciding how easy it could be to set fire to it or material around it (e.g. waste bins) and for a fire to spread. Once you have identified fire risks, you can devise 'control measures' to deprive

potential arsonists of the essential access and fuel they would need to start a fire.

Arson risk assessments should be carried out as part of the fire risk assessment required to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 sets out the fire safety management responsibilities for all premises except those used exclusively as single private dwellings. It requires premises to have a named 'responsible person' for fire risk assessments and resulting management actions. More information on the Fire Safety Order can be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/>

The template towards the back of this leaflet will help you to carry out a logical and structured risk assessment.

Sometimes a more detailed risk assessment will be appropriate, for example for very significant heritage assets where threats to commit arson have been made, or there is a

history of 'near misses' from deliberate fires set in the area. A more detailed arson risk assessment template is available at http://www.riscauthority.co.uk/free-document-library/RISCAuthority-Library_detail.rc48-arson-prevention.html

It is strongly advised that the arson risk assessment is written down and reviewed periodically if and when circumstances change.



Above: Three teenagers were arrested on suspicion of an arson attack on this Grade II listed property in Congleton, Cheshire in December 2016. The house dates from the 18th century and had been converted to flats. Three flats were affected, and two people treated for smoke inhalation. Even small-scale domestic properties can be victims of arson.

© Historic England



Mill buildings contribute enormously to the character and identity of the North West, but are particularly vulnerable to fire, especially when vacant. Maple Mill, Oldham, has been subject to repeated attacks. In October 2012, arsonists torched crates of kitchen furniture parked next to the building. The fire spread and the site went up in flames. Another mill within the complex was devastated by a blaze in 2009. Fire hit again in September 2016, followed by a massive inferno in December which gutted the main building. It took over 70 fire-fighters to control the blaze, which lasted over 11 hours. 100 nearby homes were evacuated to safeguard residents from the toxic smoke and fumes. Police confirmed in January 2017 that the incident was being investigated as arson.

© Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue

A recent survey of textile mills across Greater Manchester commissioned by Historic England indicates that 48% of all Greater Manchester textile mills have been demolished since the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments last surveyed them in the 1980s. Records from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service show that there have been over 50 significant textile mill fires since 2010, with 20 being registered as deliberate. Such attacks are endangering the future of this historic building type and lives.

Security measures

Effective security measures make a huge contribution to reducing the threat of an arson attack. Often, simple actions have the quickest, cheapest and most significant effect. The security measures below should be assessed as part of the arson risk assessment, and considered for improvement if relevant:

- Perimeter protection
- Security of doors, windows, locks, fences, gates and the building envelope as a whole
- Access control
- Intruder detection
- Security lighting
- CCTV systems
- Awareness of activities of pressure groups who could target the premises

Staff relations should also be considered for commercial premises. In many cases, occupiers of historic buildings have had no control over their design. However, it can be possible to introduce measures into the building's existing layout to deter arsonists without compromising heritage considerations. Think about areas in which someone may linger unseen and how they could be made more visible, and denying intruders' access to the roof.

The perimeter of sites can be made less easy to enter, for example by planting dense, thorny hedgerows. The main priority should be keeping intruders out, especially when buildings are vacant. The siting and securing of windows and doors, locks and bolts, fences and gates are important in building security.

Suitable precautions must be taken to identify legitimate visitors or, where appropriate, restrict publically accessible areas.

CCTV has a high deterrent effect and can also be helpful in subsequent investigations. The equipment should be of high quality and be installed to suit the prevailing conditions. These systems should incorporate suitable and secure recording equipment. Specialist advice should always be sought before installation.

For larger sites with no 24 hour security presence, frequent but irregular visits by mobile security patrols outside normal working hours can deter arson and similar crimes.

Security lighting is a cost-effective way of reducing attacks. Lights can be operated by passive infra-red detectors producing an element of surprise, as well as being more acceptable in built up areas. Historic buildings such as mills and warehouses are often local landmarks. Sensitive designed flood lighting can help to reinforce a building's communal, social and architectural value, as well as providing much needed security.

Making the arsonist visible has wider security benefits. Palisade or welded mesh fencing may be preferable to walls or solid fences, as intruders are visible.

Useful information on making vacant buildings safe is available in Historic England's guide [Vacant Historic Buildings: An Owners Guide to Temporary Uses, Maintenance and Mothballing](#).



Parr Street Mill in Liverpool's historic "Rope Walks" was demolished following an arson attack in June 2016, fire spread rapidly through the building leaving it seriously damaged. Many of the warehouses within Ropewalks have fortunately been brought back into use through the Lower Duke Street Townscape Heritage Initiative (1998-2001). The area is now largely regenerated with apartments, offices and restaurants, although several streets containing vulnerable "at risk" historic buildings remain and require protection measures.
© Liverpool Echo

Fire protection measures

The following fire protection measures help to reduce the damage caused by individual fires, as well as reducing the risk of accidental fires.

Passive fire protection

Passive fire protection works by containing fires so that they cannot spread. For example, closing doors prevents the spread of smoke and flames from lobbies, stairwells and lift shafts. Escape routes with non-combustible wall, ceiling or floor linings can prevent fires spreading, and allow people a safe means of exiting the building.

Doors and shutters in compartment walls should be able to withstand the effects of fire for the same period of time as the walls themselves.

Arson is commonly started by posting burning materials or flammable liquids through letter boxes. Several proprietary products are available to prevent this by catching and containing flammable materials.

When a building is derelict or empty, consider boarding up ground floor windows and doorways with perforated metal sheeting to

provide security and ventilation. It has been known for arsonists to set fire to a building by igniting the plywood boarding and timber frames often used to secure openings.

Some passive fire measures such as fire doors may not be appropriate for heritage premises. Advice should be sought as to whether their omission is critical to a building's fire safety.

Active fire protection

For inhabited buildings, smoke alarms are an important measure, allowing fires to be tackled quickly and contained.

Fire alarms are the simplest form of active fire protection. They are particularly important for remote or unoccupied parts of large buildings. Many heritage premises connect their fire alarms to Alarm Receiving Centres (ARCs) so that in the event of an out-of-hours activation, appropriate management and emergency service attendance can be summoned. You should liaise with your local fire service because many Fire and Rescue Services no longer attend automatic fire alarms.

For larger premises, systems to detect and control fires with water sprinklers or inert gas flooding installations may sometimes be appropriate. Water damage from fire sprinklers is limited only to the area where

fires have started and is minimal compared to the fire and smoke damage that would have resulted from an uncontrolled fire. In certain circumstances it may be possible to retrofit sprinklers, but for listed buildings, Listed Building Consent may be required. Upgrades to fire protection may best be undertaken when the site is undergoing some other form of refurbishment.

Neither passive nor active fire protection measures can be installed and then forgotten, they both require regular inspection and maintenance. Service contracts should be established with accredited contractors for installed equipment such as fire alarms and emergency lighting. For sites employing Fire Safety Managers, personnel should ensure that escape routes, fire doors and housekeeping standards are inspected regularly and records kept. These are all requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

It is important that you seek specialist advice regarding passive and active protection. Additional information and assistance may be obtained from the local fire safety department. Local Authority Conservation Officers or Historic Environment specialists should be consulted for changes to historic buildings. They will be able to advise on how to introduce measures while causing minimum harm to historic buildings, as well as whether Listed Building Consent will be required.



Damage upward of £6m at Peckforton Castle, Tarporley, Cheshire which is a Grade I Listed Building where a wedding reception was being held. Peckforton Castle is a country house, built in the style of a medieval castle. It was built in 1844-50, by Anthony Salvin for Sir John Tollemache MP. The house is the last serious fortified home built in England, created as a refuge from the social disturbances of the time.

© Historic England

Close down procedures

These are the procedures required at the end of each work period to ensure that the premises are secure, that there are no unauthorised people remaining in the buildings and that all processes have been safely shut down.

The Grade I listed
St Mary Holme Cultram Abbey, West Cumbria
© Cumbria Fire and Rescue

- **Control of combustible materials:** staff should be aware of the reasons for waste materials being removed to safe storage areas. Storage should preferably be at least 10m from the building and away from windows, eaves or other openings. Similarly staff should be made aware of the flammability and combustibility of materials and how to safely store and handle them.
- **Awareness of the threat of arson:** all staff must be trained in the hazards and consequences of an arson attack. These include the potential threat to life, loss of jobs and disruption to the continuity of the business.
- For buildings left vacant, it is important that a **contact list** and **emergency lead** are in place.
- **Security:** it is important to ensure that all security measures are initiated and checked to be in operation.

In the event of fire

It is important that all people, including staff and volunteers, know what to do in the event of a fire. The fire risk and arson risk assessments will identify fire-safety actions. Some of these may require investment and there may be considerations that the management team will have to discuss and prioritise. Others will involve how staff and volunteers are trained and the general 'culture' of the operation. At commercial and residential premises, staff and occupants should be trained in:

- What to do in the event of fire
- How to call the fire service.
- The sound of the fire alarm, the escape routes and, where appropriate, the use of the fire fighting equipment.

How to assist colleagues or members of the public (specifically allocated staff should undertake this role). The responsible person must ensure that the fire building has been effectively evacuated once this has been done, it will be necessary to implement any salvage plans, if safe to do so.

© Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue

Helping your business survive following a fire

Business continuity plans are invaluable for businesses affected by disasters. Plans should be formulated in advance and written down. They should contain the procedures, plans, agreements, important phone numbers and other vital information to enable a building to resume operations in the most effective and shortest possible time following a fire. A copy of the plan should be kept off site.

Tackling arson

Tackling the problem of arson and associated anti-social behaviour is a shared responsibility. Local authorities, Police and Fire and Rescue Services collaborate with a range of organisations to deliver effective Community Safety Partnerships.

Historic England has been working with Community Safety Partnerships across the country to integrate heritage crime, including arson, into local plans and strategies. A number of areas, including Cheshire, have introduced Heritage Watch schemes that seek to involve local communities to prevent crime, and where offences do occur, to identify and bring offenders to justice.

'Arson is a complex and serious crime and carries a maximum punishment of a life sentence. It has a wide variety of causes: vandalism; playing with fire; crime concealment; revenge; fraud; and mental illness to name just a few.'

**Home Office - Safer Communities:
Towards Effective Arson Control
1999**

The Grade I listed
St Mary Holme Cultram Abbey, West Cumbria
© Cumbria Fire and Rescue

Planning considerations

Various types of works to buildings require consent from local planning authorities or sometimes the Secretary of State.

Anyone proposing to carry out development of land, including building and engineering operations, must first obtain planning permission from the local planning authority. This also applies to development affecting heritage assets, including for example listed buildings, scheduled monuments or unlisted buildings in conservation areas.

In addition, where a heritage asset is directly affected by works, additional consent(s) might also be required. Whether or not they also require planning permission, works to listed buildings may require Listed Building Consent and almost all works to scheduled monuments require Scheduled Monument Consent from the Secretary of State.

Planning permission is needed for demolition of buildings in conservation areas. It may also be necessary to obtain authorisation from the local authority under the Building Act and the Buildings Regulations.

It is strongly advised that before carrying out any works to historic buildings, including any interior alterations for fire safety, you consult the local planning authority on the need for consent. It is a criminal offence to carry out unauthorised works to a designated heritage asset.

Fire damage and the law

Following a serious fire it is sometimes necessary for a local authority to apply to the magistrates' court for an order under section 77 of the Building Act 1984 where a building seems to an authority to be dangerous. An order under this section can require the owner to make the building safe or to demolish all or part of it.

In an emergency the authority can proceed to carry out any necessary works immediately under Section 78 of the Building Act 1984, without first applying to the court.

Where a building seems to the authority to be ruinous or dilapidated but not necessarily dangerous, it may serve a notice on the owner under section 79, requiring him or her to carry out works of restoration or repair.

Where a notice is served under sections 77 or 79 of the Building Act, if the building is either listed or in a conservation area the appropriate consents will still be required before works and/or demolition can proceed. Notices under section 77 and 79 do not override the need for such consent.

Before taking any action with a view to making a dangerous structure order under section 77 or serving a notice under section 79 affecting a listed building or building in a conservation area, the authority must first consider if the works are urgently necessary. Works may be carried out by the local authority under an urgent works notice (section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990). Local authorities may also serve repairs notices with a view to compulsory purchase (sections 47 and 48 of the Listed Buildings Act).

Local planning authorities also have a power under section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 to require the owner or occupier of land (including buildings) whose condition is adversely affecting the amenity of the neighbourhood to remedy its poor condition. This is often referred to as an untidy land notice. The power can be used whether or not a building is designated as a heritage asset, but can be useful to resolve environmental issues where historic buildings have been neglected or damaged by arson.

Where works are urgently necessary for the preservation of a scheduled monument the Secretary of State or Historic England when authorised, may carry out these works under section 5 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. This again might be used where fire has directly or indirectly damaged a scheduled monument.

In the case of designated heritage assets, namely listed buildings and scheduled monuments, the preservation of the building or structure by works of repair or works for affording temporary support or shelter, and limiting any emergency work to the minimum measures immediately necessary is most important. For further advice on planning procedures following a fire at a designated heritage site, please contact your local planning authority conservation officer.

Under Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, local planning authorities have the power to execute any works which appear to them to be urgently necessary for the preservation of the unoccupied parts of a listed building in their area including works to provide temporary support and shelter. In the case of vacant premises this may include secure blocking up of openings.

Further information

Northwest Fire Services

<http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/>
<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/cumbriafire/>
www.lancsfire.org.uk
<http://www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/>
<http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/asp/pages/Default2.aspx>

Historic England:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/conservation-research/fire/>

Heritage Crime Programme

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/heritage-crime/>

Stopping the Rot – A guide to enforcement action to save historic buildings Historic England 2016 <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/stoppingtherot/>

Vacant Historic Buildings- An owner's guide to temporary uses, maintenance and mothballing" English Heritage 2011:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/vacanthistoricbuildings/>

Timber panelled doors and fire" 01/05/1997, Technical Note Code XH20054, for this and other fire related documents, search the Fire Research Database (FReD). <http://fred.historicengland.org.uk/>

Government Fire Statistics

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#deliberate-fires>

Arson Prevention Bureau & RISC Authority

Prevention and control of arson in industrial and commercial premises
<https://www.thenbs.com/PublicationIndex/documents/details?Pub=APB&DocID=267430>

Arson Prevention Bureau publications: How Building Design can reduce the threat from Arson July 1997

Risk Control-Arson prevention- The protection of premises from deliberate fire raising: http://www.riscauthority.co.uk/free-document-library/RISCAuthority-Library_detail.rc48-arson-prevention.html

Other organisations and advice:

Fire Protection Association: <http://www.thefpa.co.uk>

Strategic Fire Protection in Historic Buildings- Cathedral Communications Ltd:
<http://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/fire/fire.htm>

Heritage under Fire- 1995 Second edition- A guide to the protection of Historic Buildings.

Attention to Detail <http://www.heritagefireandsafety.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Attention-to-detail.pdf>

National Approval Council for Security Systems (NACOSS) & National Security Inspectorate: <http://www.nsi.org.uk/>

Fire Safety Law: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-safety-law-and-guidance-documents-for-business>

