



ARSON HOTLINE

June 28, 2012

President's Message

The theme for the articles in this newsletter is Serial Arsonists.

Politicians should be doing fire investigations.

Now I have your attention. As I write this, the politicians are all over the news trying to get your vote for the coming elections. It is interesting to listen to some of the politicians "stretch" the facts and pass it on to the voters as the truth. I enjoy reading PolitiFact in the local newspaper. PolitiFact evaluates politician's statements and determines if the statements are true using their Truth-O-Meter. The meter gives the statements a rating from "Pants On Fire (false) to True. Fortunately fire investigators get the facts, evaluate them, and come to an analytical conclusion based on the facts. Some politicians would not get my vote to be a fire investigator.

Appreciate the job your fire investigator does.

WAIC has seen an increase in the number of tips from our **WISCONSIN ARSON HOTLINE (800-362-3005)**. The hotline is for an anonymous arson fire tip leading to the arrest and conviction of an arsonist. Tips can also be submitted on our website (www.wiarsonhotline.org).

Don't forget about our new Loss Investigation Equipment Grant Program to help offset fire investigation costs. Our grant can help cover costs such as digging out a basement with heavy equipment. We already paid out for equipment cost in one fire this year.

Enjoy the great weather we are having.

William H. Schultz,
President
Wisconsin Arson Insurance Council

WAIC Board Meeting Minutes: March 21, 2012

IN ATTENDANCE: Bill Schultz, Rick Crouse, Stephanie Crouse, Paul Hansen, Barry Waddell, Gary Streicher, Greg Peterson

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING MINUTES: January 18, 2012 Meeting approved as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Rick Crouse

Beginning Balance (January 18, 2012)	\$14,490.87
Income	45.00 (Regular memberships x 3)
Expenses	\$4,000.00 (Cedarburg Fire – Tips)
Ending Balance	\$10,535.87

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Bill Schultz

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Randy Dolenshek

REPORTS:

Awards: (Randy): None – 3 tips given by Rick to Greg to pass on to Randy

Membership: (Greg) 3 renewals

Sustaining Membership: (Rick) Will go out in two weeks.

Publicity:

Website Update: Minor changes needed. Place pictures of award signs with contact for signs on website (Paul). Bill has a few minor changes he will get to Paul.

Newsletter: Theme – serial arson Timetable – April

IAAI Seminars (June):

Scholarships:

Info out about scholarship? Rick received one inquiry regarding the scholarship

Deadline date? April 15th return date: Barry contacted IAAI and they now have the scholarship information.

Raise \$250 to \$275? Since WAIC also pays \$20 for meal. (Early WIIAAI registration is \$200/\$250 and \$225/\$275 after 5/15) Keep the scholarship award the same. Will revisit this issue for 2013.

Bumper stickers – Print again? No

Reminders to fire/police of our posters, organization needed again? IAAI is the proper venue for the posters, etc.

OLD BUSINESS:

Business Cards Update: (Randy) No report

Twitter/Facebook: (Paul) Paul brought a sample facebook cover page. Hopefully he will have it running in next month

WIP Funding: (Rick) Stephanie will look at 2012 WIP budget to see if there was money allocated for WAIC.

NEW BUSINESS:

FM Global Grant: No action. Rick to get Gary invoices

Annual Meeting (September) topics: Lithium Battery Fires (Frank Lockwood)

Next Meeting: May 16, 2012 at the Brewhaus

OTHER:

ADJOURN @1:10 – FM Global Grant, Website fees (\$750), Scholarships (\$750 a year)

WAIC Board Meeting Minutes: May 16, 2012

IN ATTENDANCE: Bill Schultz, Greg Peterson, Paul Hansen **NOTE: Since there were not enough Board Members at this meeting to provide a quorum, this meeting was discussion only.**

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING MINUTES: March 21, 2012 Meeting

TREASURER'S REPORT: Rick Crouse (Rick will not be at meeting, but indicated the balance is still the same as 3/21/12)

Beginning Balance	(March 21, 2012)	\$10,535.87
Income		
Expenses		
Ending Balance		\$10,535.87

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Bill Schultz – No report

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Randy Dolenshek – No report

REPORTS:

Awards (Randy): No report

Membership (Greg): Greg is to send out information in the near future

Sustaining Membership (Rick): No report

Publicity:

Website update: Minor changes needed. Place pictures of award signs with contact for signs on website (Paul). Paul indicated he will work on.

Newsletter: Since a newsletter did not go out after the March meeting, the theme, etc. will be the same.

Theme: Serial Arson

Timetable: About June 1

President's Message – Pizza man fire trial results could be added to the newsletter

IAAI Seminars:

Scholarships: We assumed two scholarships were awarded based on emails from Rick

Raise from \$250 to \$275? for future scholarships since WAIC also pays for \$20 meal

Application process – Discuss at next meeting

OLD BUSINESS:

Business Cards update (Randy): No Report

Twitter/Facebook (Paul) – By September 1, 2012

WIP Funding (Rick) – Follow-up in July with info submittal to WIP by September – Discuss at the next meeting

FM Global Grant - Discuss at the next meeting

NEW BUSINESS:

General Liability Insurance – Bill asked about coverage for WAIC since the State of Washington "arson" group has coverage. WAIC does not have insurance since the cost could not be justified for the assets we have.

Annual Meeting (September) topics – Lithium Battery Fires (Frank Lockwood)? – Discuss at the next meeting

Elections – A reminder for September.

Next Meeting: July 18, 2012 at the Brewhaus

Other:

ADJOURN: 12:15 PM

Editor's Note: The unedited document can be found at the following web site:

http://www.interfire.org/features/serialarsonists/Motive_based/appendix.asp

For this newsletter, tables and case studies have been removed.

A Motive-Based Offender Analysis of Serial Arsonists

by

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Chapter 1 The Study of Serial Arsonists

Introduction

The information contained in this report is the result of on-going research conducted by the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) at the Federal Bureau of Investigation Academy in Quantico, Virginia. The NCAVC is a law-enforcement-oriented resource center that consolidates research, training, investigative, and operational support functions to provide assistance to law enforcement agencies confronted with unusual, high-risk, vicious, or repetitive crimes. In 1986, a subunit was established within the Center to study arson and bombings. Representatives from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms joined the Center staff to serve in the Arson and Bombing Investigative Services Subunit (ABIS). This arrangement is based upon a concurrent investigative responsibility with the FBI in these areas. ABIS has the primary responsibility to provide assistance in arson, bombing, terrorism, and related violent crimes submitted to the NCAVC by federal, state, local, and foreign law enforcement agencies. The staff of the Center is joined by faculty from major universities, members of the mental health and medical professions, and other law enforcement representatives (NCAVC, 1992).

The subunit has conducted a series of studies on serial arsonists (See Icove and Estep, 1987; Icove and Gilman, 1989; Icove and Horbert, 1990; Sapp, Gary, Huff and James, 1993, 1994; Sapp, Huff, Gary, Icove, and Horbert, 1994; Huff, 1993, 1994; and Sapp and Huff, 1994. See also Douglas, Burgess, Burgess and Ressler, 1992). These studies form the basis for the conclusions and recommendations contained in this report.

Statement of Problem

This study arose from a concern about the extent of serial arson in the United States. Serial arson is an offense committed by firesetters who set three or more fires with a significant cooling off period between the fires (Douglas, et al, 1992). Arson is a violent crime, often taking the lives of innocent people, while also causing tremendous financial losses in property. According to the Uniform Crime Reports produced by the FBI (1992), arsons in 1991 exceeded one billion dollars in property loss. Arson is the second leading cause of deaths in residential fires (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1988). Despite the huge losses in property and the deaths caused by arson, relatively little research has been conducted on arsonists. Most of the available research is in the form of clinical studies of very small numbers of arsonists. (See Geller, 1992 for an extensive review of the literature on arson studies in forensic psychiatry). This study is intended to fill some of the gaps in knowledge about arsonists, particularly the serial arsonists.

This project was planned and implemented with several research goals designed to meet specific needs of arson investigators and prosecutors. The goals included:

- Identify common characteristics of arsons committed by serial arsonists.
- Identify common motives and related characteristics of arsonists who repeatedly set fires.
- Determine if serial arsonists share common characteristics with other arsonists.
- Determine the extent to which serial arsons may be classified in accordance with the Crime Classification Manual for serious crimes developed at the NCAVC. (See Douglas, et al, 1992).
- Identify any related characteristics that would be of assistance to investigators of serial arsons.

These goals are based on the belief that any understanding of the typology of arsonists, particularly typological classification based on motivations, may enhance investigative efforts and provide a focus for intervention efforts. Examination and reporting the results may facilitate dialog between the various disciplines and investigative units involved in arson study and investigation. It is also intended that the information supplied will assist arson investigators in developing skills in reading the characteristics of crime scene evidence and applying that evidence to behavior and patterns of thinking on the part of the arsonist.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the report and are defined here to facilitate understanding of the findings and conclusions of the research.

Arson - Arson is the willful and malicious burning of property (Douglas, et al, 1992). The criminal act of arson is divided into three elements (DeHaan, 1991):

1. There has been a burning of property. This must be shown to the court to be actual destruction, at least in part, not just scorching or sooting (although some states include any physical or visible impairment of any surface).
2. The burning is incendiary in origin. Proof of the existence of an effective incendiary device, no matter how simple it may be, is adequate. Proof must be accomplished by showing specifically how all possible natural or accidental cases have been considered and ruled out.
3. The burning is shown to be started with malice, that is, with the specific intent of destroying property (p.324).

Arsonist - A person apprehended, charged and convicted of one or more arsons (Douglas, et al, 1992).

Accelerant - Accelerants are any type of material or substance added to the targeted materials to enhance the combustion of those materials and to accelerate the burning (Douglas, et al, 1992).

Classification of Arson by Style and Type

A variety of descriptive terms are added to the term arson in an attempt to communicate varieties and variations in arson behavior. Some commonly used terms are single, double, triple arsons, as well as mass, spree and serial arson. As reflected in Chart 1 below, the style of the arson involves the number of fires set, the number of separate events occurring, the number of sites or locations involved, and whether or not there was a cooling off period between the fires.

Chart 1 Arson Classification by Style and Type						
Style	Single	Double	Triple	Mass	Spree	Serial
Number of fires	1	2	3	3 or more	3 or more	3 or more
Number of events	1	1	1	1	1	3 or more
Number of Sites	1	2	3	1	3 or more	3 or more
Cool-off Period	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

This classification by style and type is compatible with the classification used in the Crime Classification Manual. The terms single, double and triple arsons are shown to be the number of fires set at one site at one time in a single event. The other three terms are somewhat more complex and are defined as follows:

- Mass Arson - Mass arson involves an offender who sets three or more fires at the same site or location during a limited period of time (Douglas, et al, 1992).
- Spree Arson - Spree arson involves an arsonist who sets three or more fires at separate locations with no emotional cooling-off period between the fires (Douglas, et al, 1992).
- Serial Arson - Serial arson involves an offender who sets three or more fires with a cooling-off period between the fires (Douglas, et al, 1992).

Classification of Motivations of Arsonists

Motives:

It is in the area of motives that most of the literature on firesetting and arson has concentrated. The literature also offers a number of classification schemes and typologies, most often based on motives. Geller (1992) offers an exhaustive review of that literature and identifies 20 or more attempts to classify arsonists into typologies. Several of the earlier typologies contributed significantly to the current understanding of the motives and profiles of arsonists (in particular, see Lewis and Yarnell, 1951; Steinmetz, 1966; Robbins, 1967; Hurley and Monahan, 1969; Inciardi, 1970; Vandersall and Wiener, 1970; Wolford, 1972; and Levin, 1976). In a more recent work, Sapp, et al (1993a, 1993b) followed the Crime Classification Manual typology in their study of the motives of shipboard arsonists. Geller (1992) adds another classification to the literature, more clinically focused than most of the others. He notes that arson may be unassociated

FINDINGS

These topical reports are designed to explore facets of the U.S. fire problem as depicted through data collected in the U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA's) National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). Each topical report briefly addresses the nature of the specific fire or fire-related topic, highlights important findings from the data, and may suggest other resources to consider for further information. Also included are recent examples of fire incidents that demonstrate some of the issues addressed in the report or that put the report topic in context.

- An estimated 54,500 heating fires occur each year in the United States.
- Heating is the second leading cause of all residential building fires following cooking.
- Residential building heating fires peak in January and February; this peak accounts for 34% of fires.
- Confined heating fires, those fires confined to chimneys, fuels, fuel boxes, or boilers, account for 87% of residential building heating fires.
- Thirty-one percent of the non-confined residential building heating fires occur because the heat source is too close to combustibles.
- Residential building heating fires peak in the early evening hours between 5 pm and 9 pm with the highest peak between 6 pm and 8 pm This 4-hour period accounts for 30% of all residential building heating fires.
- The percent of residential building heating fires declines to the lowest point during the summer months from June to August. Heating fires during these months tend to be confined fuel burner/boiler malfunction fires (64%) or involve water heaters (10%).

with psychobiologic disorders or may be associated with medical or neurological disorders, or mental disorders. Geller (1992) also separates juvenile firesetting and juvenile fireplay from the adult arsonists. Appendix contains a comprehensive bibliography of research literature related to arson and motivations for arson.

Motive is defined as an inner drive or impulse that is the cause, reason or incentive that induces or prompts a specific behavior (Rider, 1980). The National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), located at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia engages in the research of arson motives. Through this research, the NCAVC has determined that the identification of the offender's motive is a key element in crime analysis. This method of analysis is used by the NCAVC to identify personal traits and characteristics exhibited by an unknown offender.

The NCAVC reviewed arson research literature, actual arson cases, and interviewed incarcerated arsonists across the nation. As a result, the following motive classifications consistently appear and prove most effective in identifying offender characteristics:

- | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------|
| 1. Vandalism | 3. Revenge | 5. Profit |
| 2. Excitement | 4. Crime Concealment | 6. Extremist |

The motivations discussed in this chapter are outlined and described in the Crime Classification Manual (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess and Ressler, 1992). For purposes of reference and ease in cross referencing, the motives are classified using the same numbering system used in the Crime Classification Manual (CCM).

200. Vandalism-motivated Arson:

Vandalism-motivated arson is defined as malicious or mischievous firesetting that results in damage to property. One of the most common targets is schools or school property and educational facilities. Vandals also frequently target abandoned structures and flammable vegetation. Vandalism-motivated arson is further discussed in Chapter 5.

210: Excitement-motivated Arson:

Offenders motivated by excitement include seekers of thrills, attention, recognition, and rarely, but importantly, sexual gratification. (The stereotypical arsonist who sets fires for sexual gratification is quite rare). Potential targets of the excitement-motivated arsonist run full spectrum from so-called nuisance fires to occupied apartment houses at nighttime. Fire fighters are known to set fires so they can engage in the suppression effort (Huff, 1994). Security guards have set fires to relieve boredom and gain recognition. Chapter 4 contains additional information on the characteristics and behaviors of excitement motivated arsonists.

220. Revenge-motivated Arson:

Revenge motivated fires are set in retaliation for some injustice, real or imagined, perceived by the offender. (See Chapter 3). Often revenge is also an element of other motives. This concept of mixed motives is expanded and further discussed below. The primary motive of revenge is further divided into four major subgroups.

221. Personal Revenge:

The subgroup with this motive, as the name implies, strikes at an individual with the use of fire to retaliate for a personal grievance. This one-on-one retaliation may be a one time occurrence and not the product of a serial arsonist. Triggering such retaliation may be an argument, fight, personal affront or any of an infinite array of events perceived by the offender to warrant retaliation. Favorite targets include the victim's vehicle, home or personal possessions.

222. Societal Retaliation:

Perhaps the most dangerous of the revenge motivated arsonists is the one who feels he has been betrayed by society in general. This person generally suffers from a lifelong feeling of inadequacy, loneliness, persecution, or abuse. He strikes out in revenge against the society he perceives has wronged him. He may suffer from a congenital condition affecting appearance or health. His targets are random and he often escalates in his fire setting behavior. All known cases involve serial arsonists. (emphasis is mine - editor)

223. Institutional Retaliation:

Arsonists with retaliation against institutions in mind focus on such institutions as government, education, military service(s), medicine, religion, or any other entity reflecting and representing the establishment. Often these arsonists are serial arsonists, striking repeatedly at the institution(s) against which retaliation is sought. The offender, in such cases, uses fire to settle grievances with the institution and to intimidate those associated with the institution. Buildings housing the institutions are the most frequently selected targets.

224. Group Retaliation:

Targets for group retaliation may be religious, racial, fraternal (such as gangs or fraternal orders), or other groups. The offender tends to feel anger towards the group or members of the group collectively, rather than anger at a specific individual within the group. The target may be the group headquarters building, church, meeting place, or symbolic targets such as emblems or logos, regardless of to what they are attached. Arsonists motivated by group retaliation sometimes become serial offenders.

230. Crime Concealment- Motivated Arson:

Arson is the secondary criminal activity in this motivational category. The fire is set for the purpose of covering up a murder or burglary or to eliminate evidence left at a crime scene. Other examples include fires set to destroy business records to conceal cases of embezzlement and the many cases of auto theft arson where the fire is set to destroy evidence. Crime concealment motives are discussed further in Chapter 5.

240. Profit-Motivated Arson:

Arsonists in this category expect to profit from their fire setting, either directly for monetary gain or more indirectly to profit from a goal other than money. Examples of direct monetary gain include insurance fraud liquidating property, dissolving businesses, destroying inventory, parcel clearance, or to gain employment. The later is exemplified by the a case of a construction worker wanting to rebuild an apartment complex he destroyed, or an unemployed laborer seeking employment as a forest fire fighter, or as a logger to salvage burned timber. (See Chapter 5 for further details).

Arsonists have set fire to western forests to rent their equipment as part of the suppression effort. In what may be the most disturbing of all, there are cases of parents murdering their own children for profit, with fire used to cover the crime. While this motive is uncommon, it is by no means rare (Huff, 1994). Cases are documented where an insured child is murdered, but more commonly the parents wish to profit from getting rid of a perceived nuisance or hindrance: their own child.

Other, non-monetary, reasons from which arsonists may profit range from setting brush fires to enhance hunting game, to setting fires to escape an undesirable environment as in the case of a serviceman (Sapp, Gary, Huff, and James, 1993, 1994).

250: Extremist-Motivated Arson:

Arsonists may set fires to further social, political, or religious causes. Examples of extremist motivated targets include abortion clinics, slaughter houses, animal laboratories, fur farms and furrier outlets. The targets of political terrorists reflect the focus of the terrorists' wrath.

Chapter 2

Summary of Previous Serial Arson and Shipboard Arson Research

This chapter provides a summary of the research projects on serial arsonists and shipboard arsonists conducted by the ABIS. These results are summarized to provide the arson investigator with information on the general characteristics of serial arsonists, including some who committed their arsons while in the United States Navy. Details of the study are also provided to provide the necessary background details to evaluate the results of the two studies.

The Serial Arsonist Project

The research involved the identification and interview of incarcerated serial arsonists. A total of 83 serial arsonists, whose conviction was final, with no appeals pending, agreed to participate in the study. The subjects were free to participate or not in the study and free to answer or not answer any question posed. Each subject clearly understood that their participation would not benefit them in any manner. Many of the interviews were tape recorded or videotaped. The convicted arsonists were interviewed using a comprehensive protocol to collect information on a variety of aspects of the arsonists' offenses, characteristics and life history. The protocol was then analyzed to extract information on 168 variables that were encoded for computer analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations to examine relationships between variables.

The study involved two purposive samples. The first sample of 42 subjects, representing one eastern and one western state were all interviewed a dozen years before the second sample. The second sample involved 41 subjects in several different state correctional systems who were interviewed in 1990-1992. The states were selected to provide a geographically representative sample of the United States. Similar protocols were used for the two samples. After data collection was completed, the two samples were compared to ensure that they were compatible and did not differ significantly on the critical variables. The samples were found to be compatible without significant differences and then were combined into a single sample for analysis.

Nearly 1,000 incarcerated arsonists' records were reviewed in the nearly three dozen facilities visited by the researchers. Those facilities included prisons, jails and mental health facilities. Approximately 200 inmates were selected for interview. Of this number some were unavailable for interview, some refused, others did not cooperate. Some who cooperated were found to not be serial arsonists. The final sample for this study involved 83 serial arsonists, including 42 subjects from the earlier interviews and 41 from the more recent ones.

Attributes of the Serial Arsonists

This research on serial arsonists has findings that consistently agree with previous research on arsonists. Most of the serial arsonists were young, white (82 percent) males (94 percent), with one-half aged 27 or younger at the time of the interviews. The data on firesetting by these serial offenders reflects (of 1,474 fires, for which age data were available, that) 59 percent were set by the offenders before age 18 and 80 percent before age 29.

The overall marital adjustment and history of the serial arsonists was poor and suggested the offenders had a lack of stability in interpersonal relationships. The average educational level of the serial arsonists was a tenth grade education with over 90 percent achieving high school or less. Two-thirds of the serial arsonists had average or higher intelligence.

The arsonists also had poor military performance and records with only two of seven completing a term in the military with an honorable discharge. One-half had tattoos and one-fourth had some type of disfigurement. The sexual preference of the serial arsonists reflected 25 percent who identified their preference as homosexual or bi-sexual.

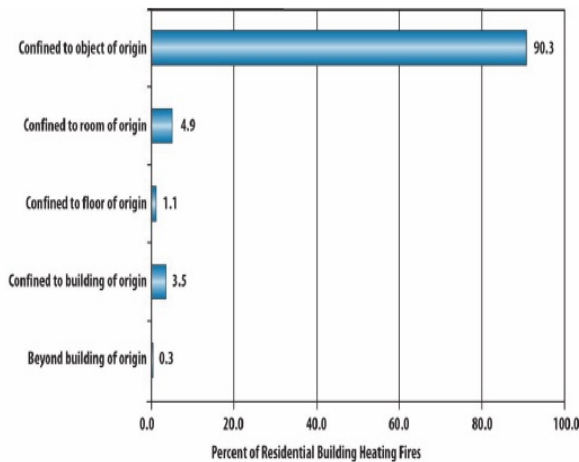
Life History of Subjects

One of the major findings was the extent of prior criminal activity by the arsonists studied. A total of 87 percent reported prior felony arrests and 64 percent had multiple prior felony arrests. Additionally, one in three reported a misdemeanor arrest record with most having multiple misdemeanor arrests. Another noteworthy aspect of the life histories of the sample was the extent that the members had spent time in various types of institutions. The 83 offenders had been placed in some form of institution a total of 637 times. The institutions ranged from orphanages to federal prison. While not all reported such an institutional placement, the overall average was more than eight placements each. The placements in orphanages and foster homes reflect family instability. Placements in juvenile homes, state and federal prisons are suggestive of criminal lifestyles. Juvenile detention placements reflect either family instability or criminal activity. A total of 38 of the serial arsonists had 275 placements in mental health institutions, reflecting the emotional and mental instability of the offenders.

Over one-half of the serial arsonists reported significant medical histories and almost one-half had psychological histories. Of interest in the psychological histories of the serial arsonists was the prevalence of prior suicide attempts by members of the group. One in four had reportedly attempted suicide at least once.

Only about one-third had regular occupations and none of those were employed in professional positions. The family situation for most of the serial arsonists was either comfortable, or at least self-sufficient. About 58 percent were raised in an intact family with both natural parents present. Another 11 percent were raised in reconstituted families with a natural parent and a stepmother or stepfather. Four percent lived with their natural father only and 13 percent with their natural mother only. Nine percent resided in foster homes and six percent with other relatives. Overall about two of three lived in either an intact or a reconstituted family. The serial arsonists reported that relationships with their mothers and fathers were often cold, distant, hostile or aggressive. Less than one-third described parental relationships as warm or close.

Figure 3. Extent of Fire Spread in Residential Building Heating Fires (2005–2007)



Source: NFRS 5.0.

The age related arson data is interesting in several ways. Analysis of 1,474 arsons, where the age of the arsonist was known, revealed that 59 percent of the fires were set before age 18, and 80 percent before age 30. It was interesting to note that 43 percent were set between the ages of 14 and 18. A notable drop in the number of fires, the number of arsonists, and the average numbers of fires set was found at age 19 to 21. The 35 serial arsonists who set fires between the ages of 14 and 16 years averaged 9.1 fires each during those ages. Between 17 and 18 years, 34 offenders averaged 9 fires each. In contrast, between the ages of 19 and 21 years, 22 offenders set an average of 4.2 fires. In the two earlier age groups, the total fires exceeded 300 for the 14-16 year old age group and for the 17-18 year old age group. For the 19-21 age group, the total was less than 100 arsons.

History of Arsons by Subjects

However, the decrease in arson activity did not hold throughout the older age groups. Those aged 30 or older set more fires, on average, than did the younger arsonists. The averages went from 13 arsons in the 30-35 age group and the 36-40 age group, and 34 arsons each in the 41-50 age group. Overall, the conclusions are evident. There are considerably more juvenile offenders but many decrease or end firesetting activities around age 19. Even so, the serial arsonists who continue their criminal firesetting after that age become more frequent offenders, setting more fires than their younger counterparts.

The offenders in this study of serial arsonists each set about 31 fires. They were questioned but not charged in 3 of those fires, and ultimately charged and convicted of three arsons. The remaining 25 arsons did not result in questioning or charges filed. These numbers suggest a clearance rate for serial arson of about 11 percent. Arson clearance rates nationally, according to the Uniform Crime Reports, averaged 18 percent for the period 1982-1991. The data would suggest that arsons committed by serial arsonists have a lower clearance rate than the overall national rate.

The study reflected the relative lack of mobility of serial arsonists. Most (61 percent) walked to the scene of the fires they set, with 70 percent of the fires set within a radius of two miles or less from the residence of the serial arsonist. Almost all of the arsons were committed in areas with which the serial arsonist was acquainted. Few owned vehicles and most set fires in their own neighborhood.

Most of the serial arsonists were apprehended through the efforts of law enforcement investigators, although nearly 15 percent confessed or turned themselves in to police. Almost none took any steps to avoid identification. They accepted responsibility for their arsons and plead guilty to charges. Most either did not consider the probabilities of being caught or rated those chances as slim. Many would have set the fires even if they thought they would be convicted. These findings suggest that much of the serial arson activity is compulsive in nature.

Characteristics of The Offenses

There were no discernible patterns in the overall target selection of the serial arsonists. A wide range of responses were given to questions about target selection. The methods of gaining access to an arson target were much more patternable. The most commonly reported method of entry into a target structure was through open entryways, a method reported by 38 percent of the serial arsonists. Another 19 percent broke into the structures and 16 percent used multiple methods to gain access to the selected target.

Accomplices took part in the serial arsonists' criminal acts in 20 percent of the cases. The sixteen serial arsonists who reported having an accomplice included 14 who had a male accomplice, one a female, and one had both a female and a male who accompanied them during their commission of arson offenses. It is interesting that those with accomplices set considerably fewer fires (average 6 fires) than those who worked alone (average 33 fires).

Almost all of the serial arsonists used unsophisticated methods in setting fires. They used available materials, paper, and gasoline as the most common accelerants and matches or cigarette lighters for ignition of the fires. Few used any kind of hand made device in their arsons. Nearly one-half left items at the scene, including items that would be key evidence. About one-fourth of the arsonists removed items, mostly valuables, from the scene before igniting a fire.

After setting a fire, about one-third of the serial arsonists remained at the scene of the fire. About one-fourth usually went to another location, away from the scene, to observe the fire and the action involved in fighting it. Another 40 percent departed from the scene and did not return. Slightly over one-half did return to the scene at some time after the fire. The return to the fire scene ranged from minutes after the fire was set to as much as a week later although 97 percent returned to the scene within 24 hours of the arson.

Residential structures were the target of 11 percent of the arsons. Businesses accounted for 18 percent of the arsons committed by the serial arsonists in this study. Other structures were the targets of the serial arsonists in 15 percent of the 1,450 fires. Overall, the serial arsonists selected structures 43 percent of the time. Vehicles were the target of the serial arsonists in 16 percent of the offenses. The serial arsonists selected a target other than structural or mobile targets for 41 percent of the fires they set.

By far the majority of the serial arsonists set only one fire in a location. However, some returned to set new fires in the same place many times. While the frequency of firesetting did not significantly change over time, the severity of offenses did. Of the serial arsonists in the study, 65 percent increased severity over time.

Nearly one-half of the arsonists used alcohol before setting fires and 26 percent reported significantly different alcohol use at the time of fires. One in three of the serial arsonists used drugs other than alcohol before setting fires and 5 percent increased drug use significantly at the time of setting fires. The significantly different use involved heavier than normal substance use by the individual. Overall, 17 percent reported increasing alcohol or drug use after setting a fire.

The Shipboard Arson Study

This research project involved the identification of confirmed arsons aboard naval vessels during the period 1983-1991. Confirmed arsons were defined as those where an arsonist had been identified, arrested and convicted of one or more arsons. Unsolved arsons and fires of suspicious or questionable origin were not included in this study. This phase of the research identified 18 arsonists who had set a total of 40 arsons aboard naval ships. Through the Naval Investigative Service, comprehensive records, including personnel files, case records, courts martial proceedings, and findings of physical evidence were made available for study.

These more common characteristics permit construction of an overview of a "typical" arson aboard a naval ship. The fire is most likely to be set on an aircraft carrier while the ship is in port. Target selection is usually random, most often involving "nuisance" type fires set in a berthing area or in a head aboard the ship. The arson is most likely to be set in evening or night hours, using paper as an accelerant and a cigarette lighter as the ignition device.

The "typical" offender is a young, white male, in the lower four enlisted ranks, who has a prior disciplinary record or a record of difficulty in adjusting to military life. He is likely to reside on the ship and to be acquainted with the area where the fire is set. Most are revenge-motivated, seeking retaliation against the Navy for perceived wrongs. Nearly two-thirds will set fires during off-duty hours. Almost all of the fires will be minor and of the "nuisance" category.

There were insufficient numbers of offenders in the vandalism and profit motivation classifications to yield "typical" descriptions. However, it is likely that profit (discharge) motivated arsonists will set fires in their own berthing areas, usually involving their bunk or property, and will remain at the scene. Profit-motivated arsonists usually set a single fire and readily confess to the offense. Arsons motivated by the desire for an early discharge from the military services are a subtype of profit-motivated arson (profit motivated arsons-other, Douglas, et al, 1992). The individual has a personal gain, which may be indirectly material, from the arson if it results in the desired discharge from the armed services. One can argue that release from a stressful and unwanted environment, along with freedom from military authority and the rigors of military life, equates to a material gain for some. Alcohol will probably not be involved in profit-motivated fires but will be a factor in vandalism- motivated arsons.

Revenge-motivated arson was the most common type found in this study with 50 percent of the arsonists being classified as revenge-motivated. Revenge-motivated fires are most likely to be set at night and may be set in a variety of areas. When the fire is a personal retaliation fire, it will likely involve the living area or property of the intended victim. Group retaliation fires will be set in the area where the group lives or works. Institutional retaliation fires may be set in varied locations, including work spaces. Most likely the revenge-motivated arsonist will have a prior military disciplinary or adjustment problem record. Consumption of alcoholic beverages prior to setting the fires is a common characteristic of revenge-motivated arsonists. Institutional retaliation arsonists may set more than one fire while the other types of revenge-motivated arsonists are more likely to set a single fire.

Fires set by excitement-motivated arsonists must be examined in two distinct classifications. The excitement-thrills motivated arsonist is probably the most dangerous of all arsonists who set fires aboard naval ships. This individual is likely to set fires at night in storage or supply areas where major conflagrations result. Alcohol is typically not involved in the excitement-motivated fires. The excitement-recognition motivated arsonists, in contrast, set nuisance type fires in varied locations and actively participate in the fire fighting effort, through reporting, warning, and fire fighting activities. The excitement-thrills arsonist is unlikely to have a prior military disciplinary record while the excitement-recognition arsonist may have such a record or a record of difficulty in adjusting to the military.

Almost all of the arsonists in this study selected targets at random, used unsophisticated ignition methods, available materials as combustibles, and common accelerants such as lighter fluid and cleaning solvents. In this study there were no elaborate incendiary devices, delayed timing mechanisms or devices, trailers, or other indications of well-planned, organized arsons noted.

The choice of locations for arsons aboard naval ships tended to be in areas where the arsonists were familiar with the scene. There appeared to be little pre-planning or selection of specific targets by most of the arsonists. When a specific target was chosen, that target was generally selected for retaliatory purposes. Available materials and accelerants were used for the fires and the most common ignition device was a cigarette lighter. Only two arsonists took an accelerant to the scene of the fire. One used lighter fluid to ignite a cabin door in a sleeping area and the other carried toluene to a storage area.

All but one of the arsonists in the study held an enlisted rank. All but three (83 percent) were in the lowest three enlisted ranks, suggesting that all were likely to be serving their first term in the Navy. Two others were in the E-4 rank. The oldest offender, aged 41 years, was a Department of Defense civilian employee. The study indicates that arsons aboard naval ships are offenses committed by young offenders. The average age for 17 of the offenders was 20.4 years. Combined with the rank data, this again suggests the offenders are most likely to be serving their first term in the Navy.

Another prominent feature of the arsons was the use of alcoholic beverages by 44 percent of the arsonists. It is possible that others may have consumed alcohol before setting fires but that information was not available. Drug use was not a characteristic of any of the arsonists studied.

The arsonists and the arsons included in this study do not differ significantly in characteristics and motivations from those studied previously by the ABIS. This suggests that arsonists who set fires aboard naval ships do so because the ships are their current places of work and residence. It is probable that these arsonists would have committed arson offenses, given similar motivations, in other environments and circumstances.

Mass and serial arsonists were represented in the study. The mass arsonist set five fires at the same location during a limited period of time. He set five fires over a two to three hour period of time in different heads on the ship. One of the fires was set in a washing machine with a pair of dungarees and the other fires involved paper in the heads.

Five of the 18 arsonists in this study were classified as serial arsonists. The serial arsonists set three or more fires with a cooling off period between the fires. In this study the cooling off period ranged from a few hours to more than a week. Three of the serial arsonists were revenge-motivated, retaliating against perceived injustices by the Navy or supervisory personnel. One set three fires 8-9 hours apart. Another set three fires with 12 hours between the first two and the third two days later. The remaining serial arsonist motivated by revenge set four fires, two on one night and two more on the next night. Two of the serial arsonists were excitement-motivated. One set four fires at intervals ranging from one to five days. The other set five fires with the interval between fires ranging from one day to 10 days.

There appear to be several distinctions that can be drawn between the actions and behaviors of arsonists who set fires aboard naval ships. The arsonists motivated by vandalism, early discharge desires, and revenge tend to set fires that can be described as nuisance fires. They usually set fires in bathroom areas, berthing areas and other relatively public areas where the fires were likely to be quickly discovered and extinguished. Paper and cloth materials

were most likely to be selected for the combustible materials in the fires. While fires in berthing areas are serious because of the danger to persons who may be sleeping in those areas, the reality is that such fires are not likely to spread very rapidly without discovery.

Excitement-motivated arsonists, on the other hand, tend to set fires that result in major conflagrations. The fires set by the excitement-motivated arsonist are more likely to be set in storage or supply areas where large amounts of combustible materials are stored and where fires have an opportunity to spread and intensify. The fires set by excitement-motivated arsonists in this study accounted for almost all of the damage losses.

This distinction suggests that, in terms of potential danger to personnel, fires in berthing areas are much less dangerous than fires set in storage and supply areas where the fires rapidly spread. The danger of smoke from a storage area fire probably exceeds the danger from a nuisance fire set in a berthing area.

Chapter 3

Revenge-Motivated Arson

Revenge-motivated fires are set as a form of retaliation for some real or perceived wrong. The event or circumstance that is perceived as a wrong may have occurred months or years before the firesetting activity (Icove & Horbert, 1990). The broad classification of revenge-motivated arsonists is further divided into sub-groups based on the target of the retaliation (Douglas et al, 1992). Serial arsonists are more likely to direct their retaliation at institutions and society than at individuals or groups. In the study of serial arsonists conducted by the ABIS, 59 percent of the revenge-motivated arsonists directed their retaliation against society in general. Seven arsonists (20.6 percent) sought revenge against institutions of society. Five (14.7 percent) set personal revenge fires and two (5.9 percent) set fires to retaliate against a group.

The "Typical" Revenge-Motivated Serial Arsonist

In the analysis of the characteristics and behavior of revenge-motivated serial arsonists, some attributes, characteristics, and behaviors were repeatedly noted. These most commonly occurring characteristics and behaviors are presented here in the form of a "typical" revenge motivated serial arsonist. It is important for the fire investigator to understand that no single offender is likely to display all of these typical traits and behaviors. However, it is also likely that any revenge motivated arsonist will, in fact, display many of these traits and behaviors. The purpose is to do more than reflect a typical arsonist. It is to provide a range of behaviors and traits most likely to be exhibited by the offender.

Attributes of the Revenge-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The revenge-motivated serial arsonist is almost always a male, although three of the five women in this sample were classified as revenge motivated arsonists. The arsonist is likely to be a white, single male with an average of 10 years of education. His performance in school was fair to poor although he has an above average intelligence as measured by IQ tests. His sexual orientation is heterosexual. He has tattoos or other disfigurements. He has not served in the military and has a menial, laborer type of job.

Life History of the Revenge-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The revenge-motivated serial arsonist is likely to have a long history of institutionalization. He has a history of misdemeanor and felony arrests and has served time in juvenile detention, state prison, and county jails. He has a psychological history and likely has been in a mental health institution for one or more stays.

He came from a lower to middle class home with average, comfortable socioeconomic status. He was raised by both parents in a family that was often described as unstable. He was most likely to be a first or second born child, raised in a family atmosphere described as cold and distant. Although his relationships with young playmates was reported to be warm and friendly, his school environment was cold and distant.

History of Arsons by the Revenge-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The revenge-motivated serial arsonists set an average of 35 fires each before their career was ended by conviction and incarceration. The average age among revenge-motivated arsonists for setting the first fire was 15 years, generally an older age than most other serial arsonists. More likely to set fires in buildings other than residences, in vegetation and vehicles. He is least likely to set business fires. Almost all of his fires will be set either outside a building or vehicle or inside when there is open entry to the vehicle or building. He very rarely breaks into a building to set a fire. The fires set by the revenge-motivated serial arsonist are intentional, pre-meditated and targeted. Although he may sometimes set a fire impulsively, the target will be one that fits his personal target criteria, based upon specific intentions to retaliate.

Characteristics of the Offenses by Revenge-Motivated Serial Arsonists

The revenge-motivated arsonist sets fires within walking distance of his home or workplace. He almost never has an accomplice and rarely confides in anyone about his role in particular fires. The fires are set in familiar areas within the arsonist's comfort zone. He usually walks to the fire scene, and leaves as soon as the fire is set. He usually does not return to the scene.

The fire is set using available materials found at the scene. The most common ignition device is a match, either paper or wooden. The revenge-motivated serial arsonist does not remove items from the scene but he usually leaves the matches. He does nothing to avoid identification and does not consider the possibility of being caught. On average, he is questioned by fire investigators three to five times before arrest. When arrested, he offers no resistance. He readily accepts the responsibility for his fires and is most likely to plead guilty.

He blames his actions on conflict with others that leads to feelings of anger while setting the fires. The revenge-motivated serial arsonist does not follow the arson case(s) in the media and does not communicate with police, media or victims. He does not take souvenirs from the scene of the fire nor does he interject himself into the case in anyway. He makes no noticeable change in his lifestyle before or after the fire.

Although the revenge-motivated serial arsonists usually use alcohol or drugs before setting a fire, the use of those substances is not different from normal use. The arsonist does not significantly alter his use of drugs or alcohol after a fire. The frequency of firesetting by revenge-motivated arsonists remains very consistent. However, the severity of the fires tends to increase over time.

The "Typical" Societal Retaliation Serial Arsonist

The revenge-motivated serial arsonist whose retaliation is directed to society in general is the most dangerous of the revenge-motivated arsonists. The personal or group retaliation arsonist may feel that his revenge is complete after one or several fires. The societal retaliation arsonist, in contrast, can never totally retaliate against society with a single fire, or even a series of fires. Therefore, he is most likely to set many more fires than the other revenge motivated arsonists. The discussion below provides some of the most common attributes and behaviors of the societal retaliation arsonist.

Attributes of the Societal Retaliation Serial Arsonist

The societal retaliation serial arsonist is most likely to be male, although two of the five females included in this study were classified as societal retaliation arsonists. The arsonist is also likely to be white and single at the time of the offenses. Although not married at the time of the arson activity, the arsonist has previously been married one or two times. He has an education of 11 years with a school record of fair to poor performance. His intelligence is above average, as measured by IQ tests. He is unlikely to have served in the military services. He is employed, in jobs ranging from menial to skilled labor and has a generally stable employment record. His sexual orientation is heterosexual.

He is likely to have a juvenile record as well as a criminal history involving both misdemeanor and felony arrests. He probably has served at least one sentence in a state prison. He is very likely to have a psychological history, often involving one or more suicide attempts.

Life History of the Societal Retaliation Serial Arsonist

The societal retaliation serial arsonist was most likely raised in a lower to middle class family with average to comfortable socioeconomic circumstances. He is likely to be the first born child in a family where both parents were present, but in a home with chronic instability. He had poor relationships with his parents and his home atmosphere was cold and troubled. School was similarly reported to be in an atmosphere that was cold and troubled and his relationships with younger playmates were often troubled as well.

History of Arsons by the Societal Retaliation Serial Arsonist

After starting setting fires at an average age of about twelve and one-half years, the societal retaliation arsonists in this study set an average of 69 fires each. He typically works alone and does not confide in anyone about his arsons. He sets fires in structures other than residences and businesses, vehicles and vegetation. He rarely selects residences or businesses as targets although buildings associated with government, education, religion or other institutions may be selected. His fires are premeditated and intentional, although individual fires may be opportunistic in terms of selection of the target.

Characteristics of the Offenses by Societal Retaliation Serial Arsonists

The fires are set in areas that are familiar to the societal retaliation arsonist, normally within one to two miles of home or workplace. Most frequently, the arsonist walks to the scene of the fire. The fires are usually set after work hours and

involve targets that have open entry. If open entry is not possible, the arsonist will set the fire outside. He uses available materials and lights the fires with matches which he leaves at the scene or with a cigarette lighter that he takes with him upon leaving the scene. He does not remove anything from the scene of the fire.

He leaves the scene and does not attempt to watch the fire. He will typically return to the scene within 24 hours to view the damage. He does nothing to disguise himself or to avoid identification. He does not consider the chances of getting caught. When he is arrested, he offers no resistance, admits responsibility and usually pleads guilty. On average, the societal retaliation serial arsonist is convicted of six arsons. Typically, he is questioned an average of five times by investigators before being arrested and charged.

After setting the fires, the societal retaliation serial arsonist does not contact the media or law enforcement and does not interject himself into the case. He does not take souvenirs nor does he even follow the cases in the media. In all respects, his life style does not change before or after committing an arson. He typically uses drugs or alcohol before setting fires but not at a level of usage significantly different from normal. His arsons tend to increase in both frequency and severity over time.

221. Personal Retaliation Serial Arsonists

Five of the serial arsonists in the ABIS study were classified as personal retaliation serial arsonists (Douglas et al, 1992). There was insufficient information to form typical statements about this type of serial arsonist. Therefore the discussion below will summarize the observed traits and characteristics of the personal retaliation serial arsonist.

Attributes of the Personal Retaliation Serial Arsonist

All five personal retaliation serial arsonists were white, four males and one female. All four of the men had tattoos. One was married, two divorced, and two were single. The average educational level for the five personal retaliation arsonists was 7.75 years. Only one had reached the level of a General Education Development (GED) certificate. One had served in the military and two others had been rejected for military service. All five had histories of misdemeanor and felony arrests. The four men had multiple misdemeanor arrests and multiple felony arrests. The female had only one misdemeanor arrest for petty theft but multiple felonies.

Life History of the Personal Retaliation Serial Arsonist

Only one personal retaliation serial arsonist had a foster home placement but all five had several stays in juvenile detention, state juvenile institutions, county jails, and state prisons. Two had also been in a mental health institution. All five had psychological histories and two had attempted suicide. Four of the five had some type of permanent physical handicap or chronic medical condition. Two of the men were heterosexual, two were bisexual and the female identified her sexual personal as homosexual. They had generally stable work histories in jobs involving unskilled and skilled labor. The average IQ score was in the low normal range.

Two came from middle class families and the remainder from lower class families. Two families were described as advantaged or comfortable socioeconomically. The other three were either marginal or submarginal. Three of the five families were described as usually stable and two as chronically unstable. Three lived in families with both parents present, one with mother alone and one with other relatives. All five of the personal retaliation serial arsonists described their relationship with their mother as warm and close but three described their paternal relationship as hostile and aggressive. The family atmosphere was warm and friendly for two, cold and troubled for two and sometimes one and then the other for the remaining member of the group. Similarly there were mixed ratings given to playmates and school atmosphere by the personal retaliation serial arsonists.

History of Arson by the Personal Retaliation Serial Arsonists

The personal retaliation serial arsonists set their first fire at an average age of 23 years, although the range was from 7 years of age to 41 years. The personal retaliation arsonists set a total of 27 fires, an average of 5.3 each. The fires were set within 1-2 miles of the arsonist's home or workplace and were usually set after work or on days off and weekends. All were in areas with which the arsonist was well acquainted and all were committed alone. Target selection was based on directing the retaliation at a person. When open entry was not available, the arsonist either broke in or set a fire outside.

Feelings as the fire was being set were described as angry, mad, getting even and revenge. Four of the fires were set in residences and four in vehicles that belonged to the person against whom the arsonist was retaliating. No fires were set in businesses by the personal retaliation serial arsonists.

Characteristics of the Offenses by the Personal Retaliation Serial Arsonists

Available materials or gasoline were used as accelerants and gas cans and matches were left behind at the scene. Two of the five personal retaliation serial arsonists used a device for ignition. One used a candle to delay ignition and the other threw a Molotov cocktail against the wall of a house.

After setting the fire, the personal retaliation serial arsonists left the scene and only returned to the scene after 1-2 days. On average they were questioned four times without being arrested. When arrested, four did not resist while one struggled physically with the arresting officers. Two denied responsibility and three accepted full responsibility.

They did not consider the possibility of being caught and three of the five stated they would have set the fire even if they knew they would have been caught. None took any actions to avoid identification. The personal retaliation serial arsonists did not change their life style or behavior after setting a personal retaliation fire. One contacted both the police and the victim after a fire.

Three of the personal retaliation serial arsonists used alcohol before setting a personal retaliation fire and two of the three indicated that the use of alcohol exceeded the normal pattern of usage. Two used drugs without significant deviation from regular drug usage patterns. Thus while substance use may be associated with personal retaliation arsons, the association does not appear to be a critical or essential element in the crime. The frequency of fires set by the personal retaliation serial arsonists did not significantly change over time. The severity of the fires also remained consistent over time.

Institutional Retaliation Serial Arsonists

In the ABIS study of serial arsonists, seven were classified as institutional retaliation arsonists. This classification of arsonist targets institutions such as churches, government buildings, universities, educational facilities or corporations (Douglas et al, 1992). The following discussion provides summarized information about the behaviors and traits of the seven institutional retaliation serial arsonists.

Attributes of Institutional Retaliation Serial Arsonists

All seven of the institutional retaliation serial arsonists were males. Five were white, one black and 1 Hispanic. Four had tattoos and all seven were single. Only one had a previous marriage. Their average educational level was 8.3 years of schooling. Six of the seven had misdemeanor records and all seven had felony records. Four of the seven had previously served a felony sentence for aggravated arson.

Life History of Institutional Retaliation Serial Arsonists

Four of the seven had records of juvenile detention and juvenile institutions. Three had mental health institution stays in their background and a history of psychological problems. All had served prison time. Three defined themselves as bisexual and four as heterosexual. Overall IQ scores were in the average intelligence range. Four of the institutional retaliation serial arsonists came from middle class families and three from lower class families. Four described their family atmosphere as warm and friendly. The other three said their family atmosphere was cold and distant. School atmosphere was warm and friendly for three and cold and distant for three. Playmates were described as warm and friendly.

History of Arsons by Institutional Retaliation Serial Arsonists

The average age of institutional retaliation serial arsonist when they set their first fire was 16 years. The seven arsonists set a total of 94 fires, an average of 13.4 each. The fires were generally set in institutional facilities within 1-2 miles of their home or workplace. Several fires were set in institutions where the arsonists were living at the time. Feelings at the time of the fires were described as angry, mad, revengeful, and frustrated.

Characteristics of the Arsons by Institutional Retaliation Serial Arsonists

The serial arsonists who set institutional retaliation fires usually walked to the scene of the fires. In some cases, the arsonist was already at the scene when the fires were set in an institution. All seven of the institutional retaliation serial arsonists set fires alone without an accomplice. A characteristic of institutional retaliation fires was the number of fires set and reset in the same building or facility. As many as 20 different fires were set in a single institution and all seven of the serial arsonists reported setting two or more fires in the same location.

Only two residence fires were set, both involving fires set against an outside wall. One business fire and one vehicle fire were set by this type of arsonist. A total of 14 fires were set in dumpsters, trash bins and trash piles. The remaining fires by this group of arsonists were in structures other than residences or businesses, in institutional facilities of various types. The fires were set using available materials and matches were the most common ignition source for the arsons. Five of the seven left items used in setting the fires behind. Typically, they did not remove items from the scene. No deaths resulted from their fires. After the fire, two remained at the scene, one went to another location to observe the fire and the remaining four left and did not return to the scene at anytime. The other three returned to the scene within 24 hours

of the fire. On average, the institutional retaliation serial arsonists were questioned four times about fires before being arrested and charged with arson. Upon arrest they offered no resistance, admitted responsibility and plead guilty in court. After the fire they continued their life style without change. They did not enter the case, follow the case nor contact media, police or victims. Over time the frequency of the fires varied from increased to decreased. The severity of the fires increased as the number of fires increased. Drugs and alcohol were not an important element of the arsons set by institutional retaliation serial arsonists.

Group Retaliation Serial Arsonists

Group retaliation arsonists direct their retaliation against religious, racial, fraternal, or other groups. In the ABIS study of serial arsonists there were only two group retaliation serial arsonists. Both were male, one white, one Hispanic. Neither was married and neither served in the military services. Average educational level was 11 years. Only one had either a misdemeanor or a felony arrest record. Both, however, had an extensive history of stays in institutions, such as orphanages, foster homes, juvenile detention and juvenile state facilities. Both had spent time in mental health institutions. Both had psychological histories that included suicide attempts.

Intelligence scores were in the average range. Both came from generally stable lower class families and both lived with two natural parents. In both cases, the relationships with both the mother and father were described as cold and distant. Family atmosphere was cold and troubled as was the school atmosphere. Relationships with playmates were seen as warm and friendly. The two group retaliation arsonists set their first fires at age 11 and 18. They set four fires each. One set the fires at work and at school, the other within one-half mile of home. Both walked to the scene of the fires. One set the fires alone, the other had an accomplice.

One described his fires as "gang activity" getting back at another gang. The other set his fires in an institution where he sought retaliation against other residents. Available materials were used by one arsonist, the other used gasoline. Matches were used to ignite the fires.

No deaths occurred from the fires set by the group retaliation serial arsonists. After setting the fires, both remained at the scene and then returned later to view the damage. They were not questioned for any fire before the ones they were arrested for setting. They offered no resistance upon arrest and accepted full responsibility for their fires. They made no life style changes and did not actively follow or become involved in the case after the fire. Alcohol and drug use were not noted in the group retaliation arsons. The fires remained consistent in frequency but increased in severity over time.

Chapter 4

Excitement-Motivated Arson

Douglas, et al (1992) classify excitement motivation arsonists into several sub-classifications. Included are thrills motivated, recognition motivated, sexual motivation, and attention motivation arsonists. The most common type of excitement motivated arsonist found in this study was the thrills type, accounting for 17 of the 25 (68.0 percent) of the excitement category. One woman was classified as an excitement-motivated, thrills-seeker arsonist. The thrill-seeker sets fires because he craves the excitement that is satisfied by firesetting (Douglas, et al, 1992:170). Four (16.0 percent) of the excitement motivated arsonists were classified as recognition seekers. These arsonists are sometimes described as the "hero" type, often remaining at the scene of the fire to warn others, to report the fire or to assist in fire fighting efforts. This type of arsonist craves the recognition and praise s/he receives for their efforts. Four (16.0 percent) others were attention seekers. These arsonists set fires to gain attention and to meet their needs of being important.

The "Typical" Excitement-Motivated Serial Arsonist

Some attributes, characteristics, and behaviors were noted repeatedly in the analysis of the characteristics and behavior of excitement-motivated serial arsonists. These most commonly occurring characteristics and behaviors are presented here in the form of a "typical" excitement-motivated serial arsonist. Again the reader and the fire investigator are reminded that no single offender is likely to display all of these typical traits and behaviors, although it is likely that any excitement-motivated arsonist will exhibit many of the traits and behaviors. The purpose here, as in the previous chapters, is to do more than reflect a typical arsonist. It is to provide a range of behaviors and traits most likely to be exhibited by the offender.

Attributes of the Excitement-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The typical excitement motivated serial arsonist is a white male who is single. He is likely to have tattoos. He has an average 11 years of schooling and was an average student in academic performance. He has a felony arrest record and may have multiple felony arrests. He is less likely to have a misdemeanor record.

Life History of the Typical Excitement-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The typical excitement-motivated serial arsonist has an extensive record of institutionalization, having been in foster homes, juvenile detention, state juvenile centers, as well as county jails and state prisons. Most have a mental health history as well. Those with mental health histories may also have suicide attempts in their background.

Usually, the excitement-motivated arsonist has a stable work background, usually employed in skilled and unskilled labor positions. He is most likely to have had a middle-class family described as average to comfortable in socioeconomic status. His relationship with his mother was likely to be warm and close but with his father, a cold and troubled relationship. He probably lived in a home with one or both parents present. His relationship with playmates aged 4-12 was reportedly warm and close but the school atmosphere was described as cold and troubled. The family was usually stable but often described as troubled and cold.

History of Arsons by the Excitement-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The excitement-motivated serial arsonist set his first fire at age 12 and set a total 40 fires on average. There is wide variation in the number of fires set by excitement motivated serial arsonists, based on the subgroup classification. Excitement-thrills motivated serial arsonists set 56 fires each while the excitement-attention motivated serial arsonists only set an average of four. The single excitement-sexual arsonist in the study set 40 fires. The excitement-recognition arsonists averaged 11 each.

The fires set by the excitement-motivated serial arsonist are typically within 1-2 miles of his home or workplace. All are set in areas with which he is familiar. Generally, he will walk to the scene of the arsons. Because he is not interested in hurting anyone, most targets are selected for minimal damage, except when the excitement-thrills arsonist is involved. In such cases, he is likely to set major conflagrations, involving businesses, residences and other structures. When he sets a vegetation fire it is likely to be a major fire, as well. His motivation requires big fires to provide the thrills.

Characteristics of the Offenses of the Excitement-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The excitement-motivated serial arsonists generally uses available materials as an accelerant and ignites the fire with matches or a cigarette lighter. Only the excitement-recognition arsonists used a device to delay ignition of the fire until he could get in position to respond to the fire. The excitement-motivated serial arsonists do not usually remove anything from the scene but they are likely to leave matches at the scene.

After setting the fire, the excitement-motivated arsonist either remains at the scene or goes to another location to observe the fire and fire suppression efforts. He will return to the scene within 24 hours of the fire. He gives no thought to the chances of being caught and would likely set the fire even if he knew he would get caught. This suggests a degree of compulsive behavior in this type of arsonist.

Once the fire is over, the excitement-motivated arsonist loses interest. After returning to the scene to see the damages, he does not follow the case in the media nor does he take souvenirs. He does not contact media, police, or victims, nor does he confide in anyone. He makes no life style or behavioral changes. Typically he does not use drugs or alcohol before the fires. If there is substance use, it is no different from normal patterns of usage. The frequency of fires may increase slightly over time but the severity is almost certain to increase. Particularly the excitement-thrills motivated arsonist seems to need bigger and bigger fires over time.

The "Typical" Thrills-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The thrills-motivated serial arsonist was the most frequently noted excitement-motivated arsonist in the ABIS study. The thrills-motivated serial arsonist differs from other excitement-motivated serial arsonists in several significant ways.

Attributes of the Thrills-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The typical thrills-motivated serial arsonist is a white male. He is single and never married. He has an average of less than 10 years schooling. His school performance was poor to average and he is unlikely to be engaged in any type of significant relationship with a woman at the time of his offenses. He is unlikely to have served in the military although he may have attempted to enlist but was rejected. He is likely to have misdemeanor arrests and almost certainly will have a record of felony arrests, probably multiple felony arrests.

Life History of the Thrills-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The typical excitement-thrills serial arsonist has an extensive history of institutionalization, ranging from foster home placements to prison. He has a history of juvenile detention and juvenile institutional placement. He has been in county jail at least once and is likely to also have a mental health record and history. He is most likely to be heterosexual but

nearly one-third are bisexual or homosexual. He has a generally stable work history at unskilled and skilled labor positions.

The typical excitement-thrills serial arsonist came from a middle class family where one or both of the natural parents were present. The family was described as socioeconomically comfortable and average and the family situation was stable. However, the family atmosphere is described as cold and troubled most of the time. His relationship with his mother was warm and close but, the relationship with his father was cold and troubled. His relationship with playmates was warm and close but the school atmosphere was cold and troubled.

History of Arsons by the Thrills-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The typical excitement-thrills serial arsonist first set a fire at age 12. Subsequent to that fire he has set an average of 56 fires. Most were in residences and vegetation but others targeted businesses, structures other than residences and vehicles. All of the fires were set within 1-2 miles from his home or workplace, in areas with which he was very familiar. When he selected a target, it was premeditated and planned. If the building did not provide open entry, he would break in to set the fire. He set the fires alone and usually walked to the scene. When setting the fire, he has feelings of thrills, excitement and power.

Characteristics of the Offenses of the Thrills-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The excitement-thrills motivated serial arsonist uses available materials for accelerants and ignites the material using matches which were left at the scene. He removes nothing from the scene and does not take souvenirs. After setting a fire, he usually leaves the scene but goes to another location to watch the fire and fire fighting efforts. He will return to the scene, usually within 24 hours to briefly observe the damage.

He is typically questioned as many as five times before being arrested. He gives little or no thought to the possibilities of being caught and states he would set fires even if he knew he would be caught. This suggests a sense of compulsion about his firesetting behavior. When arrested he offers no resistance and accepts the responsibility for his fires. While he has no direct interest in hurting anyone, his desire for fires may lead him to disregard occupants of buildings and to set fires in occupied structures.

Once he has viewed the damage, he loses all interest in the fire and returns to his usual life style and behavioral patterns. He confides in no one, discusses the case with no one and does not follow the case in the media. His fires may increase in frequency slightly over time. In the area of severity, almost certainly, the fires set by the typical thrills-motivated serial arsonist will become more severe and more dangerous to fire-fighters and local residents.

Excitement-Recognition Motivation

There were four serial arsonists who were classified as excitement recognition motivated in the ABIS serial arson study. Since four cases are too few to develop "typical" profiles, the information below is based on summarizing the data from the four serial arsonists.

Attributes of Excitement Recognition Serial Arsonists

All four of the excitement recognition motivation serial arsonists were white males and all were single, never married. Three had tattoos and two had some type of permanent disfigurement. The four had an average educational level of 11.8 years of schooling with a range from 10 years to 14 years. This group had the highest overall educational level of any of the motivational subgroups.

Life History of Excitement Recognition Serial Arsonists

None of the four excitement recognition serial arsonists had served in the military. One had multiple misdemeanor arrests and all four had prior felony arrests, including one with multiple arrests. They had unstable work histories, primarily at unskilled labor positions. Only one had a mental health hospitalization and two had psychological records. Three of the four had spent no time in institutions as a juvenile. Three of the four excitement recognition serial arsonists came from middle class families where the father was described as cold and distant and the family atmosphere as troubled and cold. Both parents were present in two of the homes. One other lived with relatives other than natural parents and one lived in a foster home. The excitement recognition serial arsonists reported childhood playmates as warm and friendly but the school atmosphere was seen as cold and troubled.

History of Arsons by Excitement Recognition Motivated Serial Arsonists

The four excitement recognition motivated serial arsonists set their first fire at an average age of 12 years and averaged 11 fires each before being arrested. All of the fires were set in areas with which the arsonists were familiar and all were

within one to two miles of their home or workplace. Two walked to the scene of all of their fires while one drove a car and the other used public transportation.

The excitement recognition motivated serial arsonists set a total of five fires in residences, 16 in other structures, 14 in vegetation and 10 in dumpsters, trash bins and similar areas. None were set in vehicles or in businesses.

Characteristics of the Arsons Set by Excitement Recognition Serial Arsonists

The excitement recognition serial arsonists set fires using available materials. Matches were the preferred choice for ignition for two of the four. The other two used devices to provide for delayed ignition. Matches and the ignition devices were left at the scene and nothing was removed. Their feelings at the time of setting the fire were described as excited and afraid. Three remained at the scene and joined in the fire suppression activities through sounding the alarm, warning others or assisting the firefighters.

All four returned later, within one day, to the scene of the arson. All stated that even if they knew they would be caught, they would have set the fire anyway. They made no lifestyle changes and did not become involved in the case in any way after the fire. Drugs and alcohol were not involved in the arson activities of these serial arsonists. Both frequency and consistency of firesetting activity remained at constant levels.

Excitement Attention Motivated Serial Arsonists

A total of four of the serial arsonists in the ABIS study were classified as excitement attention motivated. The arsonist sets fires to get attention and to be the center of concern of those around him. All four of the excitement attention motivated serial arsonists were white males. Symbolic perhaps of their need for attention, all four had tattoos. Two were single, one married and one divorced. The average educational level of the four was 10 years. Academic performance was rated as average to poor. None had served in the military. Intelligence scores were in the average range.

Life History of the Excitement Attention Motivated Serial Arsonist

Three of the four excitement attention motivated serial arsonists had felony arrests and two had misdemeanor arrests on their record. Two had previous arrests for arson. Two had juvenile detention stays and three of the four had been in a mental health facility. The usual work was in skilled and unskilled labor positions and they usually had a stable work history. Three came from a middle class family and one from a lower class. The lower class family was described as chronically unstable. Mothers were seen as warm and close while fathers were perceived as warm and close by two and cold and distant by two of the arsonists. In all four, however, the family atmosphere was described as cold and troubled. Playmates were warm and close in relationships but school atmosphere was also cold and troubled.

History of the Arsons Set by Excitement Attention Motivated Serial Arsonists

The average age for the first fire set by the excitement attention motivated serial arsonist was 18 years of age. The four excitement attention motivated arsonists set an average of 6.5 fires each. Only one was set in a residence. The others were set in other structures (15) and in trash cans, bins and dumpsters (10). All were set close to the home or workplace of the serial arsonist, and all were set without accomplices. The targets were picked to "yield minimum damage." There was no intent to harm others or to create extensive damage.

Characteristics of the Arsons Set by Excitement Attention Motivated Serial Arsonists

The fires were set using available materials and matches were used for ignition. Nothing was left at the scene nor removed from the scene. Two of the four remained at the scene and all returned to scene within 24 hours of the fire. On average they were questioned four times each before being arrested. Most gave no thought to the possibility of being caught but all four stated that they would have set the fires even if they knew they would be caught. They made no lifestyle changes nor did they join the case after the fire. They reported alcohol use before fire setting but not at a significantly different level. None used drugs. The frequency of their fires remained consistent but severity increased over time.

Chapter 5

Vandalism, Crime Concealment, Profit and Other Motives

This chapter presents information on arsonists motivated by vandalism, profit, crime concealment, and other motives. Included are descriptions of arsonists and arson-related behavior drawn from the various ABIS studies and the Crime Classification Manual.

Vandalism-Motivated Arson

Vandalism-motivated arson is based on malicious and mischievous motivation that results in destruction or damage, or setting fires simply to destroy things. The serial arsonist study conducted by the ABIS included six willful and malicious mischief arsonists whose histories and cases were used to construct the "typical" arsonist discussed below.

Attributes of the "Typical" Vandalism-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The vandalism motivated serial arsonist is typically white, male with some form of tattoo, scar or birthmark. Most have never been married and none had served in the military forces. The average educational level for vandalism-motivated serial arsonists was 11 years of schooling. His performance in school was fair to poor. He has average or below average intelligence as measured by IQ tests. His sexual orientation is heterosexual.

Life History of the "Typical" Vandalism-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The vandalism-motivated serial arsonist is likely to have a long history of institutionalization. Part of his childhood may have been spent in foster homes and in care of relatives. He has a history of multiple misdemeanor and felony arrests and has served time in juvenile detention, state prison, and county jails. He has a psychological history and likely has been in a mental health institution for one or more stays. Suicide attempts and depression are often noted in the mental health histories of these arsonists.

Their usual occupations are unskilled laborer positions and service jobs. Their employment history is described as stable or generally stable. Most come from middle class homes with average or comfortable socioeconomic conditions. The families are described as usually stable. Relationships with parents are described as warm and close with the mother but cold and distant with the father. Most lived with one or both natural parents for most of their childhood. (In this study four of the six were third born children in the family). Relationships with school and young playmates were described as cold and troubled. Their families were very religious and involved in local church activities.

History of Arsons by the "Typical" Vandalism-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The typical vandalism-motivated serial arsonist started firesetting at an early age. Fires may have been set before six years and the first arson fire was set at an average age of eight years. The vandalism-motivated arsonist sets fires only in areas that he is well acquainted with and sets fires alone. Trash bins, dumpsters and trash cans are his primary targets but he will set fires in unoccupied or vacant buildings, usually setting the fire outside the building unless there is open entry to the structure. Businesses will rarely be the target of a vandalism-motivated fire.

Vandalism-motivated serial arsonists set fires whenever the opportunity arises but most will be set after work or school hours or on weekends. This likely time is based on opportunity, not a particular choice of the arsonist. Typically the fires will be set within one-half to one miles from home or work with the arsonists walking to the scenes of the arsons. An automobile may be used, if available, to travel to the scene of the offenses. If (so, the vehicle likely will have average wear and tear and will have no special accessories, such as spotlights, Citizen Band radios or scanners.

Characteristics of the Offenses of the Vandalism-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The typical vandalism-motivated arsonist will use available materials to set fires with book matches and cigarette lighters as the ignition device for the fires. Typically, nothing is left at the fire scene nor is anything removed from the scene before the fire is ignited. In this study, the vandalism-motivated arsonists set an average of 12 fires each. He will take no actions to avoid identification.

Usually the vandalism-motivated arsonist will leave the scene and not return to the scene. His interest is in setting the fire, not watching it or the fire-fighting activities generated by the fire. On average the vandalism arsonist will be questioned twice before being arrested and charged. He will offer no resistance when arrested but will qualify and minimize his responsibility. After an initial not guilty plea, the vandalism-motivated arsonist will typically change the plea to guilty before trial.

This type of arsonist does not consider it likely that he will be caught or does not even consider the possibility. The fires are impulsive, opportunistic, and unplanned. Vandalism-motivated arsonists may become involved in the case, following the case in the media and sometimes communicating with police or media, They are unlikely to interject themselves into the case, however, nor or they likely to confide in anyone about their arsons. Most will maintain their current lifestyle without significant change after firesetting.

The vandalism-motivated arsonist is likely to have consumed alcohol or used drugs before fire setting; however there is no significantly different alcohol or drug use at the time of an offense. Over time the frequency of offenses will remain relatively stable. However, the severity of the fires set by the vandalism-motivated serial arsonist is very likely to increase.

Crime Concealment Motivations

Four of the serial arsonists were classified as crime concealment motivated. According to the Crime Classification Manual (Douglas, et al, 1992), the arson is secondary to another crime and is set to hide or conceal the primary crime activity. In the four cases in this study, the primary crime was burglary. After burglarizing a business or a residence, the serial arsonists set fire to the structure to destroy the evidence of the burglary.

In a current study underway at ABIS, arson-homicides are being studied. Preliminary results suggest that crime concealment is a major factor in such crimes. Of 62 cases of arson-homicide studied, nearly one-third involved a burglary, over one-fourth a sexual assault, and nearly one-fifth, a robbery as well as the arson-homicide. Thus, 79 percent of the cases of arson-homicide involved an associated crime. In many of these cases, the primary purpose of the offender was likely to commit the associated crime with homicide and then arson as secondary and tertiary events after something went wrong in the primary event. If these arson-homicides are representative, the data would suggest that crime concealment may be the primary motive for the arson component of the crimes.

Another component of the current ABIS study of arson-homicides deals with the issue of time of fire injury in homicide cases. The major question studied is whether the fire injuries to the body of the victim occurred before death (ante-mortem) or after death (post-mortem). The assumption is that, in almost all cases, fire injuries post-mortem are intended to conceal the crime, destroy evidence or make identification of the victim more difficult. In cases of ante-mortem fire injury, the fire becomes part or all of the cause of death. Post-mortem fire injury was noted in almost 70 percent of the bodies in 183 cases of arson-homicide. However, the percentages differed considerably by general location and specific location.

Statistically, fire injuries received after death are most frequent in outdoor and vehicular locations while ante-mortem injuries are more frequent in indoor locations. These data then leads to the conclusion that it is relatively easy to set a fire in a residence or indoor location and leave a live, breathing victim to die in that fire. However, to transport a living victim to an outdoor location or to place the victim in a vehicle for purpose of a fire is more difficult and less likely to occur.

The remainder of this discussion of the crime-concealment-motivated serial arsonist is based on the four cases in the ABIS serial arsonist study. Four cases are not enough to develop typical profiles; therefore, the results will be reported with reference to the four cases only.

Attributes of the Crime Concealment-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The four crime-concealment-motivated serial arsonists were all male, two white, two black. All four had tattoos and three had never been married. The fourth was married and divorced. At the time of their crimes, three were living with a "significant other" and one was living alone. The four had an average educational level of 11 years of schooling with a range from 9 years to 12 years of schooling. Their academic progress and performance was described as average. None had served in the military, although one had applied and been rejected because of low scores on the written test. All four had multiple felony arrests and three of the four had misdemeanor arrests on their records.

Life History of the Crime Concealment-Motivated Serial Arsonist

Unlike the other serial arsonists, crime concealment arsonists were much less likely to have a childhood history of institutionalization. Only one had a juvenile record and none had been in orphanages, foster homes or other institutions. Three of the four had a psychological history but none were diagnosed as chronically mentally ill. The four all had a generally stable work history, working at skilled and unskilled labor jobs.

The family histories of the crime concealment motivated serial arsonists were generally unremarkable. All four came from middle class families enjoying average to comfortable socioeconomic status, although three of the families were described as chronically unstable. The three chronically unstable were families headed by a single parent, the father. The fourth arsonist also came from a single parent family, but one headed by his mother. Relationships with mother and father were all described as warm and close. The family atmosphere was also described as warm and close. Childhood playmates were reportedly warm and close to the arsonists who attended school in a friendly and warm atmosphere. All four families were described as moderately religious.

History of Arsons by the Crime Concealment-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The crime-concealment-motivated serial arsonists committed an average of only 5 arsons each, a total far below the average for the other types of serial arsonists. However, their overall firesetting behavior was relatively similar to that of the other types. Two of the four first remember setting a fire at age five and two reportedly did not set a fire until age 13.

The crime-concealment-motivated serial arsonists set their fires close to home, all occurring with no more than 10 miles from their home. They typically walked to the scene of the crime and subsequent arson designed to conceal the crime. Three of the four usually had an accomplice, one sometimes had two accomplices. All of the fires were set in areas with which they were well acquainted. Fires were set in residences, businesses, vehicles and other structures to conceal thefts or to destroy evidence. Interestingly, all four reported setting one or two vegetation fires as juveniles.

Characteristics of the Offenses of the Crime Concealment-Motivated Serial Arsonist

Crime concealment arsonists set their fires using available materials found at the scene. These materials usually involved paper, rags or trash but one used gasoline found at the scene. Matches or cigarette lighters were used to ignite the fires. Two deaths resulted from the fires set by crime concealment arsonists. Items were removed from the scene before igniting the fire in all cases.

Following the arsons, the crime-concealment arsonists all left the scene, but all four returned to view the overall damage within 1-2 days after the crime. They made no attempt to follow the case in the media, to contact the media, police or the victim nor to interject themselves into the case. They confided in no one, other than their accomplice who was at the scene, and basically made no behavioral or life style changes following the arsons. All four wore gloves to avoid leaving evidence at the scene of their burglary-arsons.

They were questioned an average of one time each before being arrested and charged with arson. They offered no resistance upon arrest but they minimized and qualified their responsibility. Fifty percent had used drugs and 50 percent had used alcohol at the time of their offenses. The drug and alcohol usage did not represent any change from normal usage patterns. The frequency of the arson offenses committed by these four serial arsonists was very consistent. The severity of the fires, however, increased over time.

Profit-Motivated Serial Arsonists

Four other serial arsonists were classified as profit motivated arsonists. Arson for profit is a fire set for the purpose of achieving material gain either directly or indirectly (Icove, Schroeder and Wherry, 1979). The four serial arsonists in this study set fires for others for a price. They are called "torches for hire" in the criminal culture. Because there are only four cases, no attempt is made to offer a typical profile but instead the four cases are discussed below.

Attributes of the Profit-Motivated Serial Arsonist

All four of the profit motivated serial arsonists were white males. At the time of their offenses, one was single, one separated and the other two divorced. Their academic achievement ranged from grade 5 to grade 12 with an average of 9 years of schooling. Their academic performance was described as poor to average.

Two of the four had served in the United States Army and both had moderate difficulty in adjusting to military life. Both received general discharges and neither progressed above the E- 1 entry level rank. Neither had any military criminal history. Three of the four had both misdemeanor and felony records, including one felony conviction for arson.

Life History of the Profit-Motivated Serial Arsonist

The arson-for-profit offenders did not have extensive institutionalization in their backgrounds. Only one had ever been in a foster home and two had brief juvenile detention/juvenile institution stays. Despite their records, only one had served jail time and none has been incarcerated in a state or federal prison. None had any mental health record or history. Their work history was relatively stable, involving unskilled and skilled laborer positions.

Three of the four came from lower socioeconomic class homes and one from a middle class home. The middle class home was described as advantaged, while the other three were reportedly average to marginally adequate. All four families were seen as usually stable. Relationships with the mother were described as warm and close while relationships with the father were mixed, ranging from warm and close to hostile and aggressive. One described his family atmosphere and school atmosphere as cold and troubled but the others described theirs as warm and close.

History of Arsons by the Profit-Motivated Serial Arsonist

Two of the profit-motivated arsonists set their first fires at ages 12 and 14 while two others did not set their first one until ages 23 and 24. The profit-motivated serial arsonists set an average of 11 fires each. The profit motivated arsons were set in pre-selected targets, often involving travel to the scene. The arsonists either drove their car, rode public transportation, or in a few cases, walked to the scene of the fires. Their personal vehicles were described as average wear and tear to neglected and in poor condition. Three had an accomplice who accompanied them to the scene. Targets, preselected, involved primarily businesses although one residence fire was included. Vehicles and other structures were also targeted on occasion.

Characteristics of the Offenses of the Profit-Motivated Serial Arsonist

Three of the four profit-motivated arsonists set fires using delayed ignition devices and one used gasoline. Items were removed from the scene in two of the cases and nothing was left by any of the arsonists. A cigarette lighter was used to ignite gasoline by one of the arsonists. All were questioned from three to six times before arrest. All four were charged and convicted of a single arson. All were caught through the efforts of investigators and none offered resistance at arrest. All four accepted responsibility and led guilty.

After setting the fires, none of the four remained at the scene although two went to another location where they could watch the fire. All four returned to the scene within 1-2 days after the fire. Two of the four took souvenirs from their arsons and all followed the case in the media. Although there was no contact with the media or police, the profit-motivated arsonists did contact the property owner-victim who was an accomplice in the crime. The profit-motivated arsonists made no life style or behavioral changes after a fire. Two of the four reported using alcohol or drugs before setting a fire, but that usage did not differ from their normal patterns of substance use. The frequency of arsons committed by the profit-motivated serial arsonists did not change over time but the severity of the fires did increase.

Mixed Motives

Five of the serial arsonists exhibited mixed motives, sometimes behaving as though motivated by one type of motive and then at another time, by another. As an example of mixed motives, one serial arsonist set some fires for vandalism, later set several in revenge of a perceived wrong, and still later was hired to burn businesses for profit.

Mentally Disordered Motives

Five others had emotional problems (2), or blamed "evil spirits" (2) or religious fervor (1) as reasons for the arson activity. This group included one of the five females in the sample. None of these five arsonists exhibited patterns of behavior that allowed classification according to the Crime Classification Manual (Douglas, et al, 1992). For purposes of this study, we have classified the five offenders as having mentally-disordered motives. When clinically evaluated, at least some of these five serial arsonists would probably be classified according to the psychobiologic categories suggested by Geller (1992).

Chapter 6

Implications for Arson Investigators

This chapter provides specific items of information that may be of immediate value to fire investigators. The data is organized and presented according to the arson classification design in the Crime Classification Manual. This information should be used in conjunction with the Crime Classification Manual to assist investigators in determining motivations, identifying offender characteristics and modus operandi. The information presented is based on the typical, the usual, the expected and it is understood that many cases of arson are unusual, unexpected and atypical. Thus not all of the information will, nor should it be expected to, be present in every case. The intent is to provide the fire investigator with as many tools and as much information as possible.

260. Serial Arsonists

- Most serial arsonists are young, white (82 percent) males (94 percent).
- Most serial arsonists have prior felony arrests and two-thirds have multiple prior felony arrests.
- Two in three serial arsonists have a misdemeanor arrest record with most having multiple misdemeanor arrests.
- Most serial arsonists have spent time in various types of institutions.
- There are considerably more juvenile offenders but many decrease or end firesetting activities around age 19.
- The serial arsonists who continue their criminal firesetting after age 19 become more frequent offenders, setting more fires than their younger counterparts.
- Most serial arsonists walked to the scene of the fires they set, with 70 percent of the fires set within a radius of two miles or less from the residence of the serial arsonist.
- Almost all of the fires were set in areas familiar to the serial arsonist.
- Serial arsonists use unsophisticated methods in setting fires. They use available materials, paper, and gasoline as the most common accelerants and matches or cigarette lighters for ignition of the fires.
- Over one-half leave items at the scene, usually a match.
- Over 50 percent of serial arsonists returned to the scene.
- Of those that returned to the scene, 97 percent did so within 24 hours of the arson.
- The majority of serial arsonists set only one fire in a location. However, some return to set new fires in the same place many times.
- The frequency of firesetting by serial arsonists usually does not significantly change over time.
- The severity of the fires set by serial arsonists tends to increase over time.

200. Vandalism-Motivated Arson:

- Vandalism-motivated arson is defined as malicious or mischievous firesetting that results in damage to property.
- One of the most common targets is schools or school property and educational facilities.
- Vandals also frequently target abandoned structures and flammable vegetation.
- The vandalism-motivated serial arsonist has average or below average intelligence as measured by IQ tests.
- The vandalism-motivated serial arsonist is likely to have a long history of institutionalization.
- The vandalism-motivated serial arsonist usually has a history of multiple contacts with authorities.
- The vandalism motivated arsonist sets fires only in areas with which he is well acquainted.
- Trash bins, dumpsters and trash cans are his primary targets but he will set fires in unoccupied or vacant buildings, usually setting the fire outside the building unless there is open entry to the structure.
- Businesses will rarely be the target of a vandalism-motivated fire.
- Typically the fires will be set within one-half to one mile from home or work with the arsonists walking to the scenes of the arsons. An automobile may be used, if available, to travel to the scene of the offenses further from home or work.
- The typical vandalism-motivated arsonist will use available materials to set fires with book matches and cigarette lighters as the ignition device for the fires.
- Usually the vandalism-motivated arsonist will leave the scene and not return to the scene. His interest is in setting the fire, not watching it or the fire-fighting activities generated by the fire.
- Over time, the frequency of offenses will remain relatively stable.
- The severity of the fires set by the vandalism-motivated serial arsonist is very likely to increase.

210: Excitement-Motivated Arson:

- Offenders motivated by excitement include seekers of thrills, attention, and recognition.
- The typical excitement-motivated serial arsonist is a white male who is single.
- The typical excitement-motivated serial arsonist has a felony arrest record and may have multiple felony arrests.
- The typical excitement-motivated serial arsonist has an extensive record of placements in foster homes, juvenile and adult correctional facilities.
- The excitement-motivated serial arsonist set his first fire at age 12 and sets a total 40 fires on average.
- The fires set by the excitement-motivated serial arsonist are typically within 1-2 miles of his home or workplace. All are set in areas with which he is familiar.
- Generally, he will walk to the scene of the arsons
- The stereotypical arsonist who sets fires for sexual gratification is quite rare.
- Potential targets of the excitement-motivated arsonist range from nuisance fires to occupied apartment houses at nighttime.
- The excitement-motivated serial arsonist generally uses available materials as an accelerant and ignites the fire with matches or a cigarette lighter.
- The excitement-motivated serial arsonist does not usually remove anything from the scene but he is likely to leave matches at the scene.
- After setting the fire, the excitement-motivated arsonist either remains at the scene or goes to another location to observe the fire and fire suppression efforts.
- He will return to the scene within 24 hours of the fire.
- Alcohol is typically not involved in the excitement motivated fires.
- The frequency of fires may increase slightly over time but the severity is almost certain to increase.

211, Excitement-Thrills Motivation

- The excitement-thrills motivated arsonist is probably the most dangerous of the excitement-motivated arsonists. This arsonist is likely to set fires at night in areas where major conflagrations result.
- The excitement-thrills arsonist is likely to cause major conflagrations, involving businesses, residences, other structures or vegetation.
- When setting a fire, the typical excitement-thrills serial arsonist has feelings of thrills, excitement and power.
- The typical excitement-thrills serial arsonist has an extensive history of institutionalization, ranging from foster home placements to prison.
- The typical excitement-thrills serial arsonist first set a fire at age 12.
- The typical excitement-thrills serial arsonist in the ABIS study set an average of 56 fires in residences, vegetation, businesses, structures other than residences, and vehicles.
- All of the fires were set within 1-2 miles from his home or workplace, in areas with which the typical excitement-thrills serial arsonist was very familiar.
- Target selection by the typical excitement-thrills serial arsonist is premeditated and planned.
- If the targeted structure does not provide open entry, he will break in to set a fire,
- The typical excitement-thrills serial arsonist set the fires alone and usually walked to the scene.

- The excitement-thrills motivated serial arsonist uses available materials for an accelerant and ignites the material using matches which are left at the scene.
- The excitement-thrills motivated serial arsonist removes nothing from the scene and does not take souvenirs.
- After setting a fire, the excitement-thrills motivated serial arsonist usually leaves the scene but goes to another location to watch the fire and fire fighting efforts.
- The excitement-thrills motivated serial arsonist will return to the scene, usually within 24 hours to briefly observe the damage.
- The excitement-thrills motivated serial arsonist is typically questioned as many as five times before being arrested.
- The excitement-thrills motivated serial arsonist gives little or no thought to the possibilities of being caught and states he would set fires even if he knew he would be caught.
- When arrested, the excitement-thrills motivated serial arsonist offers no resistance and accepts the responsibility for his fires.
- The excitement-thrills motivated serial arsonist's fires may increase in frequency slightly over time.
- Almost certainly the fires set by the typical thrills-motivated serial arsonist will become more severe and more dangerous to fire-fighters and local residents over time.

212. Excitement Attention Motivations

- Three of the four excitement-attention motivated serial arsonists had felony arrests, including two with prior arrests for arson.
- All four of the excitement-attention motivated serial arsonists were white males.
- Symbolic perhaps of their need for attention, all four of the excitement-attention motivated serial arsonists had tattoos.
- The four excitement-attention motivated arsonists set an average of 6.5 fires each.
- All fires set by excitement-attention motivated serial arsonists were set close to the home or workplace of the serial arsonist.
- The fires set by excitement attention motivated serial arsonists were set without accomplices.
- Targets were picked to "yield minimum damage." There was no intent to harm others or to create extensive damage.
- The fires were set using available materials and matches were used for ignition.
- Nothing was left at the scene nor removed from the scene.
- Two of the four excitement-attention motivated serial arsonists remained at the scene and all returned to scene within 24 hours of the fire.
- On average they were questioned four times each before being arrested.
- Most excitement-attention serial arsonists gave no thought to the possibility of being caught but all four stated that they would have set the fires even if they knew they would be caught.
- The excitement-attention motivated serial arsonists made no lifestyle changes nor did they interject themselves into the case after the fire.
- The excitement-attention motivated serial arsonists reported alcohol use before fire setting but not at a significantly different level.
- None of the excitement-attention motivated serial arsonists used drugs.
- The frequency of the fires set by excitement-attention motivated serial arsonists remained consistent but severity increased over time.

213. Excitement-Recognition Motivations

- Fire fighters are known to set fires so they can engage in the suppression effort.
- Security guards have set fires to relieve boredom and gain recognition.
- Excitement-recognition motivated arsonists set nuisance type fires in varied locations.
- Excitement-recognition motivated arsonists often actively participate in the fire fighting effort, through reporting, warning, and fire fighting activities.
- The excitement-recognition serial arsonist sometimes used a device to delay ignition of the fire until he could get in position to respond to the fire.
- This group had the highest overall educational level of any of the motivational subgroups.
- All of the fires were set in areas with which the arsonists were familiar and all were within one to two miles of their home or workplace.
- The arsonists set fires using available materials.
- Three of the four excitement-recognition serial arsonists remained at the scene.
- All four returned later, within one day, to the scene of the arson.
- All stated that even if they knew they would be caught, they would have set the fire anyway.
- They made no lifestyle changes and did not become involved in the case in any way after the fire.
- Drugs and alcohol were not involved in the arson activities of these serial arsonists.

- Both frequency and consistency of firesetting activity remained at constant levels.

220. Revenge-Motivated Arson:

- Revenge-motivated fires are set in retaliation for some injustice, real or imagined, perceived by the offender.
- Revenge-motivated arsonist is likely to have a long history of institutionalization.
- Expect a history of misdemeanor and felony arrests and time in juvenile detention, state prison, and county jails.
- The revenge-motivated arsonist typically has a psychological history and likely has been in a mental health institution for one or more stays.
- The arsonist is likely to be a white, single male with an average of 10 years of education.
- The revenge-motivated arsonist has tattoos or other disfigurements.
- This arsonists is more likely to set fires in buildings (other than residences), in vegetation and vehicles.
- Almost all of his fires are set outside, forcible entry is rare.
- The fires set by the revenge-motivated serial arsonist are intention and premeditated.
- The revenge-motivated arsonist usually walks to the fire scene, leaves as soon as the fire is set, and usually does not return to the scene.
- The fire is set using available materials found at the scene.
- The most common ignition device is a match, either paper or wooden.
- The revenge-motivated serial arsonist does not remove items from the scene but he usually leaves the matches.
- On average, the revenge-motivated serial arsonist is questioned by fire investigators three to five times before arrest.
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages prior to setting the fires is a common characteristic of revenge-motivated arsonists.
- Revenge-motivated serial arsonists usually use alcohol or drugs before setting a fire, but the use of those substances is not different from normal use.
- The frequency of firesetting by revenge-motivated arsonists remains very consistent.
- The severity of the fires set by revenge-motivated arsonists tends to increase over time.

221. Personal Retaliation

- The arsonist with this motive strikes at an individual with the use of fire to retaliate for a personal grievance.
- This one-on-one retaliation may be a one-time occurrence and not the product of a serial arsonist.
- Favorite targets include the victim's vehicle, home or personal possessions.
- Four of five personal retaliation serial arsonists had some type of permanent physical handicap or chronic medical condition.
- Two of the men were heterosexual, two were bisexual and the female identified her sexual preference as homosexual.
- The fires by personal-retaliation serial arsonists were set within 1-2 miles of the arsonist's home or workplace and were usually set after work or on days off and weekends.
- All of the fires by personal-retaliation serial arsonists were in areas with which the arsonist was well acquainted and all were committed alone.
- Available materials or gasoline were used as accelerants and gas cans and matches were left behind at the scene.
- After setting the fire, the personal-retaliation serial arsonists left the scene and only returned to the scene after 1-2 days.
- Neither frequency nor severity of the fires increased over time.

222. Societal Retaliation:

- The most dangerous of the revenge-motivated arsonists is the one who feels he has been betrayed by society in general.
- He may suffer from a congenital condition affecting appearance or health.
- His targets are random and he often escalates in his fire setting behavior.
- All known cases involve serial arsonists. The societal-retaliation arsonist can never totally retaliate against society with a single fire, or even a series of fires. Therefore, he is most likely to set many more fires than the other revenge-motivated arsonists.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist is most likely to be male, white, and single at the time of the offenses.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist is generally employed, in jobs ranging from menial to skilled labor.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist's sexual orientation is heterosexual.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist is likely to have a juvenile record as well as a criminal history involving both misdemeanor and felony arrests and probably has served at least one sentence in a state prison.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist is very likely to have a psychological history, often involving one or more suicide attempts.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist typically works alone and does not confide in anyone about his arsons.

- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist sets fires in structures other than residences and businesses, vehicles and vegetation.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist rarely selects residences or businesses as targets.
- His fires are premeditated and intentional.
- Fires are set in areas that are familiar to the societal-retaliation arsonist, normally within one to two miles of home or workplace.
- Most frequently, the arsonist walks to the scene of the fire.
- The fires are usually set in the late hours and involve targets that have open entry. If open entry is not possible, the arsonist will set the fire outside.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist uses available materials and lights the fires with matches which he leaves at the scene or with a cigarette lighter that he takes with him upon leaving the scene.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist does not remove anything from the scene of the fire.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist leaves the scene and does not attempt to watch the fire. He will typically return to the scene within 24 hours to view the damage.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist typically uses drugs or alcohol before setting fires but not at a level of usage significantly different from normal.
- The societal-retaliation serial arsonist arson activities and firesetting tend to increase in both frequency and severity over time.

223. Institutional Retaliation:

- Arsonists with retaliation against institutions in mind focus on such institutions as government, education, military service(s), medicine, religion, or any other entity reflecting and representing the establishment.
- Often these arsonists are serial arsonists, striking repeatedly at the institution(s) against which retaliation is sought.
- Buildings housing the institutions are the most frequently selected targets.
- Institutional-retaliation arsonists often set more than one fire at a location while the other types of revenge motivated arsonists are more likely to set a single fire.
- All seven of the institutional-retaliation serial arsonists were males. Five were white, one black and one Hispanic.
- Six of the seven institutional-retaliation serial arsonists had misdemeanor records and all seven had felony records.
- Four of the seven institutional-retaliation serial arsonists had previously served a felony sentence for aggravated arson.
- The average age of institutional-retaliation serial arsonists when they set their first fire was 16 years.
- The seven arsonists set a total of 94 fires, an average of 13.4 each.
- The fires were generally set in institutional facilities within 1-2 miles of their home or workplace.
- Several fires were set in institutions where the arsonists were living at the time.
- All seven of the institutional-retaliation serial arsonists set fires alone without an accomplice.
- A characteristic of institutional-retaliation fires was the number of fires set and reset in the same building or facility. As many as 20 different fires were set in a single institution and all seven of the serial arsonists reported setting two or more fires in the same location.
- On average, the institutional-retaliation serial arsonists were questioned four times about fires before being arrested and charged with arson.
- Upon arrest the institutional-retaliation serial arsonists offered no resistance, admitted responsibility and led guilty in court.
- Over time the frequency of the fires set by the institutional-retaliation serial arsonists varied.
- The severity of the fires by the institutional-retaliation serial arsonists increased.
- Drugs and alcohol were not an important element of the arsons set by institutional-retaliation serial arsonists.

224. Group Retaliation:

- Targets for group retaliation may be religious, racial, fraternal, or other groups.
- The offender tends to feel anger towards the group or members of the group collectively, rather than anger at a specific individual within the group.
- Targets may be the group headquarters building, church, meeting place, or symbolic targets such as emblems or logos.
- Arsonists motivated by group-retaliation sometimes become serial offenders.
- Matches were used to ignite the fires set by the group-retaliation serial arsonists.
- No deaths occurred from the fires set by the group-retaliation serial arsonists.
- After setting the fires, the group-retaliation serial arsonists remained at the scene and then returned later to view the damage.

- The group-retaliation serial arsonists were not questioned for any fire before the ones they were arrested for setting.
- The group-retaliation serial arsonists offered no resistance upon arrest and accepted full responsibility for their fires.
- The group-retaliation serial arsonists made no life style changes and did not actively follow or become involved in the case after the fire.
- Alcohol and drug use were not noted in the group retaliation arsons.
- The fires set by group-retaliation serial arsonists remained consistent in frequency but increased in severity over time.

230. Crime Concealment- Motivated Arson:

- The fire is set for the purpose of covering up a murder, burglary or other crime or to eliminate evidence left at a crime scene.
- Crime-concealment arsonists are unlikely to have a childhood history of institutionalization.
- Crime-concealment motivated serial arsonists committed an average of only 5 arsons each, well below the average for the other types of serial arsonists.
- The crime-concealment motivated serial arsonists set their fires close to home, all occurring within 1-2 miles of their home. They typically walked to the scene of the crime.
- The crime-concealment motivated serial arsonists often had an accomplice.
- All of the fires were set in areas with which they were well acquainted.
- Fires were set in residences, businesses, vehicles and other structures to conceal thefts or to destroy evidence.
- Crime-concealment arsonists set their fires using available materials found at the scene.
- Matches or cigarette lighters were used to ignite the fires.
- Items were removed from the scene before igniting the fire in all cases.
- Following the arsons, the crime-concealment arsonists all left the scene, but returned to view the overall damage within 1-2 days after the crime.
- Crime-concealment arsonists took measures to avoid leaving evidence at the scene of their arsons.
- The crime-concealment-motivated serial arsonists were questioned an average of one time each before being arrested.
- They offered no resistance upon arrest but they minimized and qualified their responsibility.
- The frequency of the arsons committed by the crime-concealment-motivated arsonists remained consistent but the severity of their fires increased over time.
- Investigators should note that, in a major study of arson-homicides, nearly one-third involved a burglary, over one-fourth a sexual assault, and nearly one-fifth a robbery as well as the arson-homicide. Overall, 79 percent of the arson-homicide cases involved an associated crime.
- In many arson-homicide cases, the primary purpose of the offender was likely to commit the associated crime with homicide and then arson as secondary events.
- Crime-concealment may be the most frequently occurring motive in arson-homicides.
- A primary indicator of crime-concealment arson, in arson-homicides, is when fire injuries are received post-mortem, indicating the victim was dead when the fire was set.
- In crime-concealment arson-homicides, burns were post-mortem in 70 percent of the cases.
- When burned bodies are found outdoors, 79 percent of the bodies had post-mortem burns.
- When burned bodies are found indoors, 64 percent had post-mortem fire injuries.
- In 73 percent of indoor cases, the victim knew the offender.
- Burned bodies in vehicles exhibit post-mortem fire injuries in 64 percent of the arson-homicides.
- In cases involving multiple victims of arson-homicide, 90 percent were indoors. In such cases, burning occurred ante-mortem in 60 percent.
- In low-risk victims of arson-homicide, the burning of the body was ante-mortem in 82 percent of the cases. In high-risk victims, the burning was post-mortem in 82 percent of the cases.
- In arson-homicides, 80 percent of females involved burning postmortem. In males, 60 percent was post-mortem burning.

240. Profit-Motivated Arson:

- Arsonists in this category expect to profit from their fire setting, either directly for monetary gain or more indirectly to profit from a goal other than money.
- Profit-motivated serial arsonists are likely to be white males.
- The arson-for-profit serial arsonists did not have extensive institutionalization in their backgrounds.
- None had any mental health record or history.
- The profit-motivated serial arsonists set an average of 11 fires each.
- The profit-motivated arsonists often had an accomplice who accompanied them to the scene.

- Targets of profit-motivated serial arsonists were pre-selected and involved primarily businesses although one residence fire was included.
- Vehicles and other structures were also targeted on occasion.
- Three of the four profit-motivated serial arsonists set fires using delayed ignition devices.
- After setting the fires, none of the profit-motivated serial arsonists remained at the scene, although two went to another location where they could watch the fire.
- The profit-motivated serial arsonists returned to the scene within 1-2 days after the fire.
- The frequency of arsons committed by the profit-motivated serial arsonists did not change over time but the severity of the fires did increase.
- There are cases of parents murdering their own children for profit, with fire used to cover the crime.

250: Extremist-Motivated Arson:

- Arsonists may set fires to further social, political, or religious causes.
- Examples of extremist-motivated targets include abortion clinics, slaughter houses, animal laboratories, fur farms and furrier outlets.
- The targets of political terrorists reflect the focus of the terrorists' wrath.
- Multiple offenders are common.
- Incendiary devices, such as Molotov cocktails, are often involved.
- Graffiti, slogans and defamatory writings may be present at the scene.
- The use of symbols and symbolic writing suggest youthful offenders.
- Unexploded incendiary or explosive devices may be present at the scene which often features overkill.

Appendix

Bibliography on Arson and Arson Motivations

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