The South Carolina Arson Hotline (1-800-92-ARSON) is a statewide, toll-free number, available 24 hours a day, for reporting information about suspicious fires.

Arson fires increase the cost of insurance to all consumers.

Vandalism is the leading cause of arson. An Insurance Research Council study suggests only 14 percent of arson suspects are motivated by a desire to defraud an insurance company but other studies find it higher. Between 20 and 25 percent of arson fires are drug-related.

Children under the age of 18 are responsible for almost half of the arson fires set in the United States and people under the age of 25 account for 70 percent of arson arrests.

Rewards through the South Carolina Arson Hotline have been paid in Aiken County, Charleston, Clinton, Columbia, Dillon County, Gaffney, Greenville, Hemingway, Jasper County, Lancaster, Lake City, Laurens, Marion, Scranton and Westminster.

The largest reward offered was $22,000 in the case of the Effingham Baptist Church fire in 1996. The largest reward paid was $7,000 in the cases of the Springhill AME Church in Dillon and Islamic Center and Masjid of Greenville fire in 1997. The largest reward paid for a home or business related fire was $2,500 in the cases of the downtown Columbia home fires and J.P. Holley Funeral Home fire in 2007.

In 2007, the SLED Arson Team received 205 arson cases and investigated nearly $3 million in property losses.

The national average loss value per arson offense is $17,289 (according to the FBI and the Insurance Information Institute). Using this figure, the SLED Arson Team investigated more than $3.5 million in property losses in 2007.

In the past five years, more than 7,000 calls through the SC Arson Hotline resulted in 375 tips which have led to the arrest and conviction of arsonists.

According to the Insurance Information Institute, arsonists destroyed $878 million worth of property in 2007, down 1.2 percent from 2006. The number of civilians killed in arson fires in 2007 totaled 295, down 3.3 percent from 2006. These fires included factories, residential buildings, churches and motor vehicles. Only 18 percent of the cases were cleared by arrest nationwide in 2007.

All hotline information is immediately forwarded to fire and police officials in the jurisdiction where the fire took place. At the request of local authorities, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) Arson Team will assist with arson investigations.

The Arson Hotline (1-800-92-ARSON), and all publicity and promotional materials, are funded by the South Carolina Insurance News Service, a non-profit insurance organization.

Arson Hotline yard signs, posters, cards and bumper stickers are available FREE from the South Carolina Insurance News Service.

For more information about the South Carolina Arson Hotline (1-800-92-ARSON), visit www.scinsurance.net or call the South Carolina Insurance News Service at 803-252-3455.

The South Carolina Arson Hotline has been a joint program of the South Carolina Insurance News Service and the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) since 1982. Hotline rewards are funded by the Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of South Carolina Foundation.

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