



In the U.S., an average of 5,500 fires occur each year in public, private and parochial schools where students attend during the day only. These fires are responsible for approximately 125 injuries, fewer than five fatalities, and \$50.1 million in fire loss.

- 61% of school structure fires are arson; 70% of high school fires are arson.
- Fatalities from school fires are rare, but injuries per fire are higher than those of non-residential structure fires.
- The leading area of fire origin is the school lavatory.
- The number of school fires decreases on weekends and during summer breaks.



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SCHOOL FIRES



**To Learn
or
To Burn?**



WHAT CAN I DO?

Report suspicious activity near a school or its out-buildings to the local police.

FIRE CAUSES

The leading cause of school structure fires is incendiary or suspicious (commonly referred to as “arson”) — nearly nine times that of any other cause. Other leading factors in school fires are short-circuits and electrical failures. In Minnesota, the leading cause remains arson, but children playing with fire is next, which could be expected with an institution catering to predominantly juvenile population.

WHEN FIRES START

Peak months for school fires are May, March and October. Fire incidents are rarest in July and August, when students are generally on summer vacation. Ninety percent of school fires occur during the school week and only 10% on week-ends. More than 70% of fires occur between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. — the hours students are usually in school. Sixteen percent of fires occur between 5 p.m. and midnight; 12% occur between midnight and 8 a.m. The pattern is consistent for all major causes.

WHERE FIRES START

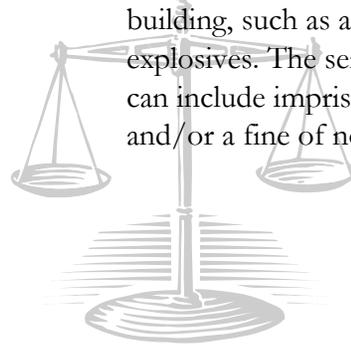
Most school fires originate in bathrooms, typically in trash cans. These areas present children with a place to set a fire where there is not constant adult supervision. Outdoor areas, including Dumpsters and fields, are the second leading locations of school fires.

MATERIAL IGNITED

The most common materials ignited in school fires are paper, plastic, wood and fabric — common materials in and around schools.

WHAT IS THE PENALTY?

With reference to Minnesota State Statutes in Chapter 609, a juvenile may be charged with felony first degree arson for intentionally damaging an occupied building, such as a school, with fire or explosives. The sentence for this crime can include imprisonment for 20 years and/or a fine of not more than \$35,000.



KIDS AND FIRE

While many of us are fascinated with fire, young people lack the experience necessary to make appropriate decisions about it. Children who deliberately set fires rarely “grow out of it.” They need help, and the solution lies in linking the child and the family with an appropriate agency to address the behavior.

The Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division has developed the Juvenile Firesetter Helpline to make it easier to find help with the dangerous problem of fire-setting by juveniles.

Juvenile Firesetter Helpline

1-800-500-8897

This sign is posted at all suspected arson fires. If you have information that will aid in the apprehension of arsonists, contact the Arson Hotline.

