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Residents can work together to extinguish serial arson through Neighborhood Watch programs.

That is the theme of the 2011 Arson Awareness Week – “Working Together to Extinguish Serial Arson.” The city council proclaimed the week of May 1 as National Arson Awareness Week in Burleson.

Serial arson is defined as an offense committed by fire setters who set three or more fires with a significant cooling off period between the fires. These fires plague many rural and urban communities and cause significant loss of life and millions of dollars in property damage.

In Burleson, there have been no reported arsons since Oct. 1, 2010.

A neighborhood’s arson problem can range from youngsters setting nuisance fires to a serial arsonist. The Burleson fire marshal and inspector/investigator work with the fire and police departments on arsons. The next step is to include the community by working with existing Neighborhood Watch groups.

What can you do? Remove all garbage, material and excess vegetation that could be ignited; remove flammable liquids and unused gas containers; remove abandoned vehicles; secure abandoned and vacant homes that are potential targets; and encourage Neighborhood Watch members to patrol the area, write down descriptions, license plates of suspicious vehicles and potential suspect descriptions.

The fire marshal’s office, staffed by Fire Marshal Stacy Singleton and Fire Inspector/Investigator David Butler, is responsible for creating a fire-safe environment. The two handle fire safety programs; perform inspections at all places where the public assembles (schools, businesses) to learn the layout of buildings and protect the safety of occupants and firefighters; aggressively investigate criminal acts, such as arson; and conduct plan reviews for residential subdivisions, site developments, new construction, fire protection systems, and gas well sites.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) reports an estimated 210,300 intentionally set fires each year that result in approximately 375 deaths and 1,300 injuries. If you want to become part of the solution, call the fire marshal at 817-426-9174 or email ssingleton@burlesontx.com.