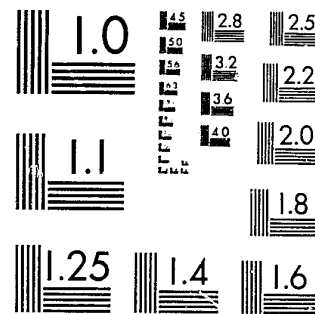


National Criminal Justice Reference Service



This microfiche was produced from documents received for inclusion in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot exercise control over the physical condition of the documents submitted, the individual frame quality will vary. The resolution chart on this frame may be used to evaluate the document quality.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART  
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

Microfilming procedures used to create this fiche comply with the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Justice  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C. 20531

4/13/83

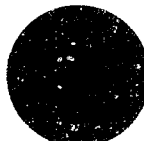
87570

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice  
This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.  
Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material has been granted by  
PUBLIC DOMAIN/LEAA  
to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).  
Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.



HARRY HUGHES  
GOVERNOR  
NATHANIEL E. KOSSACK  
CHAIRMAN

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
MARYLAND CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL  
SUITE 700, ONE INVESTMENT PLACE  
TOWSON, MARYLAND 21204-4182  
(301) 321-3636 - TTY FOR THE DEAF 486-0677



RICHARD W. FRIEDMAN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Maryland Arson Control Program:  
Project Summary

INTRODUCTION

History of Program Development

In late 1978, recognizing the increasing concern being raised regarding the problem of arson at the local, State, and federal levels, the Executive Director of the Governor's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (now the Maryland Criminal Justice Coordinating Council)\* and the State Fire Marshal formed a special Arson Advisory Committee. The purpose of this Committee was to assess the extent of the arson problem throughout the State, analyze the present measures being taken to deal with the problem, determine where needs existed, and map out plans to meet those needs. In order to insure adequate representation and allow for full participation of all agencies and organizations involved in arson suppression, the heads of each of the following organizations were invited and participated in the planning process:

- Maryland Fire and Rescue Advisory Council
- Maryland Arson Investigators Association
- Arson Control Association of Maryland
- Maryland State Firemen's Association
- Maryland Chiefs of Police Association
- State's Attorney Coordinator
- Governor's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice
- State Fire Marshal's Office

The heads of each of these groups participated in several committee meetings in early 1979 during which time seven areas of need or major factors for consideration in addressing the arson problem were identified:

1. Training of volunteer and career fire fighters in arson detection;
2. Enhancements of presently organized fire investigation units;
3. Public education toward the arson problem;
4. Consolidation of efforts in arson investigation;
5. Training of prosecutors;
6. Personnel and equipment for arson suppression; and
7. Technology, research and development, and overall coordination.

\*On February 4, 1982, the Commission's title was changed by Executive Order to the Maryland Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. This order reaffirmed the Council as the single state agency responsible for providing leadership in policy development, planning, implementation, evaluation, and coordination for all activities in Maryland concerning juvenile and criminal justice agencies, delinquency prevention and crime control, and the administration of justice.

Based on these assessed needs, members of the Committee consulted with their constituents as to the most appropriate means for meeting these needs. It was decided that, to the maximum extent possible, efforts should be made on a Statewide basis, providing assistance uniformly throughout the State. Training for fire officers, investigators and prosecutors; public education; evidence analysis enhancements; and improved information reporting and systems were to be developed and implemented on a Statewide basis. Specific enhancements of presently organized fire investigation units were to be handled at the individual subdivision level. As a result of the very positive response from all agencies involved in arson control, a comprehensive, integrated, multi-faceted approach to address Maryland's Arson problem was designed. This plan was developed into the Maryland Arson Control Program grant application, and was submitted to the Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) in September, 1979.

The Statewide grant application contained information about the extent of Maryland's Arson problem, and descriptions of how funds should be used if the grant was funded. It also included a review of Maryland's existing laws regarding arson, including case law regarding arson investigation and a description of those agencies empowered to perform arson detection, investigation, and reporting.

Program Award and Administration

On December 14, 1979, Maryland was awarded a \$588,167 grant composed of \$529,350 in Federal funds and the remainder (10%) in matching funds from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. In January, 1980, a meeting of project leaders from the implementing agencies was held to review the award and discuss revisions to the application necessary to coincide with the Federal grant award. By March, all of the revised subgrants had been received.

The program was originally scheduled for 18 months (from January 1, 1980 to June 30, 1981), but was extended six months to December 31, 1981 to permit completion of all activities. The possibility of applying for continued Federal funding was eliminated when the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration was terminated.

All Federal and matching funds were awarded as subgrants to subdivisions and State agencies as described below.

Overall Program administration and coordination remained the responsibility of the Governor's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. In order to effectively coordinate the Maryland Arson Control Program, the Commission held periodic meetings of the Arson Project Directors and other interested individuals. These well-attended sessions provided an opportunity to review each subgrantee's progress, discuss problems of mutual interest and concern, and most importantly determine solutions to such problems.

87570

The Commission staff also performed the Program's financial management functions and acted as liaison to LEAA for all Program administration activities requiring Federal guidance and approvals.

The arson control strategy funded under this grant involved the provision of assistance at two levels. Training, public education, evidence analysis enhancement, and development of a Statewide incident reporting system were handled at the State level. The State Fire Marshal's office and State's Attorney's Coordinator were recipients of the State level grants. Simultaneously, specific enhancements to locally organized fire investigation units were made within several local subdivisions. These included specific efforts to improve arson detection and prosecution through better coordination of law enforcement, fire and prosecutorial services in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, Prince George's Counties; and Annapolis, Hagerstown, and Baltimore Cities. Thirdly, contractual funds were awarded to the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, University of Maryland to conduct arson detection training.

#### SUBCRANTS

##### State Agencies

##### State Fire Marshal's Office

The State Fire Marshal's Subgrant was applied to three main functions: Improved Arson Detection, Public Education and Awareness, and Data and Information. These efforts were administered largely by a full-time Arson Project Coordinator within the Fire Marshal's office who was hired with grant funds. The Coordinator also performed a liaison function with organizations and agencies including the Arson Control Association of Maryland, Maryland Arson Investigators Association, and the local subdivisions' Arson Committees and Task Forces such as the Baltimore City Mayor's Arson Task Force, among others.

##### Improved Arson Detection:

The Fire Marshal's office managed the subgrant with the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute for Arson Detection and Investigation Training. Over 60 classes throughout the State were conducted and nearly 2,500 fire officers and firemen, both paid and volunteer, were trained. This exceeded the original training target of 1,500 firemen by two thirds. The Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute uses the Arson Detection and Investigation for Fire Officers Course developed by the subgrant in their ongoing programs.

A five day advanced arson investigation course addressing arson for profit was attended by over 60 participants including officials from Maryland State agencies and local subdivisions, as well as officials from surrounding states, and the District of Columbia. This course was co-sponsored with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms of the U. S. Treasury Department.

A Mobile Evidence Collection and Analysis Van was purchased and outfitted with grant funds. It continues to be used to investigate suspected arsons and has already resulted in the successful conclusion of several arson cases. A second van, purchased by a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) was equipped with LEAA grant funds and is maintained at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg. This second van is used for instructional as well as investigative purposes.

##### Public Education and Awareness:

A toll free arson "hotline" within the Fire Marshal's office was put in service in June, 1980. This number permits any Marylander to call in information which may help fire investigators solve suspected arsons, without revealing one's identity. It remains in service seven days a week, 24 hours/day. A reward, or TIP program, was coordinated with the hotline and has provided monetary rewards to those who contributed information which led to arrest and conviction of arsonists. Reward funds were made available by the Arson Control Association of Maryland. The hotline number periodically is stamped on all State employees' paychecks.

The Arson Project Coordinator within the Fire Marshal's office participated in several radio and television interviews and numerous speaking engagements. Public service announcements were prepared and used on radio and in newspapers. Members of the Baltimore Orioles assisted in video taped announcements for anti-arson education. Pamphlets and other written materials were also prepared and distributed.

##### Data and Information:

One of the key program needs identified in the Statewide Project grant application was for thorough, accurate and timely information on the extent of the arson problem. A system similar to the U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) was proposed in the application at a statewide level. The Maryland Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS) envisioned in the grant application involved total reporting from all fire departments throughout Maryland and greater detail in the data contained in these reports. Through the inclusion of more specific arson information arson incidents could be linked to arrests of arson suspects.

Considerable gains were made in improving the data and information gathered as part of the Statewide project but not to the degree originally envisioned. Although many fire companies supply information to MFIRS, data conversion and other problems impeded full development of the system.

##### State's Attorney's Coordinator

The Maryland Arson Control Program subgrant to the State's Attorneys' Coordinator enabled more than 100 prosecutors and arson investigators from across the state of Maryland to attend one of two arson training programs which were conducted by the National College of District Attorneys during the spring and fall of 1980. These two training programs acquainted Maryland prosecutors with the problem of arson generally, and provided them with a fundamental understanding of the physical and technical aspects of incendiary fires as well as providing them with a broad overview of arson investigative and prosecutorial techniques.

A more in-depth, advanced arson workshop was also made possible by this grant which was attended by 30 prosecutors and investigators specializing in the investigation and trial of arson cases in their respective subdivisions. This advanced workshop featured nationally recognized arson specialists from both federal agencies and prosecutors' offices from around the country. While we were unable to document the overall effectiveness of these training programs, reports from specific subdivisions concerning the increased number of arson prosecutions and convictions indicate that this training had a very positive impact on the trial of such cases across the state.

This grant also provided funds for the development and publication of a Maryland Arson Manual which has now been distributed to all Maryland State's Attorneys, and numerous arson investigation personnel across the state. Copies have also been sent to selected federal agencies as well as to arson investigation and prosecutorial offices around the country, so they may use it in developing similar material for their own jurisdictions. Although this manual was developed for use by Maryland prosecutors it should also be helpful to fire investigation personnel and other law enforcement officials responsible for conducting arson investigations. The manual contains the basic scientific and technical information necessary to achieving an understanding of incendiary fires and a review of Maryland Statutes and case law on arson trial techniques.

#### Local Subdivisions

##### Anne Arundel County

A full time Task Force of Police and Fire Investigators was established to combat arson in the County. Equipment including cameras and related equipment and binoculars were procured through the Maryland Arson Control Program to strengthen the County's arson control capabilities. Police and fire personnel participating in the Task Force received specialized training to improve their arson control skills. It appears that the efforts commenced under the Statewide program will continue, possibly even at an expanded level, under the County's administration.

##### Baltimore County

As a component of the Maryland Arson Control Program, the Baltimore County Fire and Police Departments developed a Major Fire Investigation Unit which concentrated on long term investigations that involved fires classified as Fraud and/or resulted in over \$100,000 in losses with no arrests imminent. The Unit consists of one Fire Investigator and one Police Investigator, and worked only on special investigations. The Unit investigated six fires which resulted in over one million dollars in losses with satisfactory results. Special equipment to assist in arson investigations was purchased through LEAA funds under the Maryland Arson Control Program.

##### Montgomery County

The Statewide program component grant in Montgomery County has provided equipment and training. A mobile crime lab was procured and equipped to conduct arson investigations. A polygraph examiner was also trained to test suspects in large fire losses and bombings, and several items of equipment were purchased with LEAA funds as well.

##### Prince George's County

As part of the Maryland Arson Control Program, the Prince George's County High Incident Area Tactical Program (H.I.P.) established a well equipped and trained personnel unit. A crime analysis pattern recognition program was also developed.

The overall evaluation of the Prince George's County High Incident Area Tactical Program indicated that it reduced arsons in the target area (that area worked by the Tactical Program Unit) by 40%, and in the entire County by 3%.

In evaluating the statistical data for the project year in the target area and comparing that with the 12-month period in the preceding year, it concluded that there were 18% fewer arsons during the project year, and 12% fewer arsons throughout the County. The dollar loss in the County was reduced by 12% which translates into about \$213,917.

In addition, a fully equipped surveillance van, using "state of the art" equipment, was placed in service to assist in arson control. (This unit was funded by the County.) The interior was built by investigators assigned to the H.I.P. unit.

A multi-image, anti-arson slide program was developed and presented in the junior and senior high schools during the school year.

The H.I.P. unit assisted in training fire fighters and fire ground officers, both career and volunteer throughout the County, in the recognition of arson.

Prince George's County succeeded in reducing the number of arsons occurring in the County for two consecutive years. Recent national case clearance rate for arson, according to F.B.I. statistics, shows a 17% rate. Prince George's County clearance rate for the same reporting period of January 1, 1981 through June 1, 1981 was 37.8%, over twice the national average.

#### City of Annapolis

The Maryland Arson Control Program subgrant to the City of Annapolis was used to establish the Annapolis Arson Task Force. This Task Force was specially trained and equipped to investigate arson. It has realized a marked improvement in the quality of arson investigations, resulting in an increased conviction rate. The Task Force has also contributed to arson prevention through its work in assuring adherence to fire code conditions. A Task Force Advisory Board was also created composed of individuals from the public sector to better inform the fire community about their needs for arson control.

#### Baltimore City

In 1980, Baltimore received Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration funding via the discretionary Arson Control Program supplemented by formula funds to establish an Arson Strike Force. The Strike Force is strictly an operations group comprised of fire and police personnel and prosecutors. Their primary focus is to improve the investigation, clearance and prosecution of arson cases. The efforts of the Strike Force are monitored by the Arson Task Force which was appointed by Mayor William Donald Schaefer in December, 1979 to develop recommendations for curbing the problem of arson in Baltimore City. The Task Force is an interdisciplinary group comprised of representatives from police, fire, housing, capital development, finance, education, juvenile services agencies, as well as the private insurance industry and property owners association. The Task Force frequently provides input on how resources may be applied to enhance the Strike Force's efforts. During the project period, the Strike Force was able to achieve a 95.5% conviction rate on cases reaching verdict.

As a result of the working relationship of the Strike and Task Forces, the following problems were identified and addressed:

School Fires. The Strike Force determined that response to school fires could be improved if school buildings could be easily identified by helicopter patrol. The Task Force presented a recommendation to the Department of Education that identifying numbers be printed in large scale on school building rooftops. The recommendation was accepted by the Department of Education.

Counseling Juvenile Firesetters: The Strike Force found that juveniles are responsible for a significant percentage of incendiary fires, and that several adult offenders had a history of fire setting tracing back to their juvenile years. The Task Force responded by seeking the development of counseling services for youth who are involved in firesetting activities. Using the range of resources available through the Task Force, a program was developed. The Task Force used a networking approach and helped draw together all those agencies who provide delinquency prevention and treatment services, i.e., schools, Youth Service Bureaus, Police Youth Service Divisions, and the Health Department. A one-day workshop was held for these service providers to sensitize them to the problem of juvenile firesetters, as well as to make them aware of counseling methods for the involved youth and their families. On November 6, 1981, the Mayor's Arson Task Force hosted a luncheon to provide the media with information concerning this program in order that they may bring families in need of services in contact with the program.

Advertisement: To heighten citizen awareness and concern, the Task Force has employed various means for advertising the Arson problem to the public. These include billboards, tailboards on City buses, brochures, pamphlets, cards, stickers, public displays and speaking engagements. Each emphasized the need for citizen involvement and the statewide arson information telephone number.

In Service-Training: To insure that all involved parties understand each others' needs, police officers, fire fighters and prosecutors have received cross-training in arson detection and investigation. Additionally, selected individuals received training in their speciality area.

Private Sector Involvement: It is important to note the extent and commitment of private sector participation, particularly from the insurance industry.

For example, the Joint Insurance Association purchased films for the Task/Strike Forces to use in training and public education; printed brochures, pamphlets, cards, stickers and other materials; and solicited contributions for Task Force activities from various private insurance carriers. The private sector has also actively participated in legislative developments concerning prosecution, insurance procedures, etc., which might deter profit-motivated arson.

In addition to the insurance industry, in-kind services have also been obtained from other private companies.

Finally, Baltimore participated in a joint U.S. Conference of Mayors/U.S. Fire Administration Arson Pilot City Program. The purpose of the program was to provide technical assistance to four pilot cities in the nation, and share information, as appropriate.



City of Hagerstown

The Maryland Arson Control Subgrant to the City of Hagerstown was used to purchase several items of much-needed arson investigation equipment. This included a camera for use in investigations, gas sniffers, fingerprint kits, and specialized lighting equipment. As stated by the City's Project Director, however, the "opportunity to work with and become acquainted with other investigative agencies and share their successes and problems is as beneficial and useful as the ...equipment used" and training received.

CONCLUSION

The Maryland Statewide Arson Control Program took over three years and nearly \$600,000 to plan, implement, and complete. Yet in many areas, it fulfilled only the first steps of improved arson prevention, detection and control. The need for continued efforts to develop thorough and timely automated data on arsons is but one example of an incomplete task.

The project enhanced arson control by providing staff to State and local agencies to coordinate anti-arson activities and assist in investigations and adjudication of suspected arsonists. It also provided training to thousands of fire fighters and made possible the purchase of sophisticated arson detection and investigation equipment.

One of the most valuable benefits provided by the project, however, is one for which no funds were directly budgeted, and yet which everyone involved in the program agreed was its greatest asset. The Maryland Arson Control Program improved coordination among all law enforcement, fire and other agencies whose cooperation is necessary to reduce arson incidents and prosecute those that do occur more effectively. The fact that the Project Directors periodically met with one another, discussed their problems and shared ideas contributed greatly to a more cohesive approach to arson control both within and among local subdivisions and between State and local agencies. The reluctance of the Project Directors to discontinue meetings at the termination of the grant is evidence of their understanding of the need for coordination in addressing Maryland's arson problem, and their commitment to working jointly to formulate new approaches and solutions.

**END**