



Yakima Police Department



News Release

Subject: Suspicious Fires Prevention

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Police Asking for Community Help to Prevent Suspicious Fires

Yakima police are asking for the community's help in preventing suspicious fires by providing information about people who loiter around businesses and other commercial buildings after hours.

This past summer, nearly 30 suspicious fires occurred in Yakima over the span of about six weeks, a number fire and police officials say was unusually high. The majority of those fires, as is the case with most suspicious fires, occurred at night or early in the morning when it was still dark.

"It's unusual for one person to be hanging around a business or commercial building when it's not open," said Yakima Police Lieutenant Mike Pollard. "A lone individual standing around or sitting by a building that is not open for business is one possible indication that they may be involved in something they shouldn't be involved in."

Fire investigators and police detectives say accelerants or other fuels, such as gasoline, diesel fuel, kerosene, turpentine, or other flammable solvents, are often used in suspicious fires to ensure flames grow quickly and travel farther than they normally would. So, a person milling around a building during non-business hours with a backpack or something else used to carry things may be considered suspicious.

The presence of other flammable materials, like cardboard or stacks of paper, near a person hanging around a building that's not open for business also raises suspicion as does the person acting nervous by pacing back and forth, turning their back to other people who might see them, or having a vehicle waiting nearby.

"If people see any of those suspicious signs or behaviors, they are encouraged to report them," said Pollard. "The more eyes and ears that are out there helping keep our community safe the better. People are encouraged to share whatever information they may have, no matter how significant or insignificant they may think it is," said Pollard.

If community members see suspicious activity taking place, they can call 9-1-1 at the time the activity is occurring. Reports can also be provided to YPD detectives by calling 575-6200 or through Yakima County Crime Stoppers by calling 249-9980 or submitting a tip online at crimestoppersyakco.org.