# Infinite Command

## 2020's Spike in Arson Fires

*Predictable?*

*Reversible?*

*Preventable?*

*We witnessed a health crisis, cultural discord and a stiff economic downturn in 2020, could any of these have contributed to the spike in arsons? If so, what can you do about it? Here we'll identify the contributing factors and explore proactive measures to help end the trend and reduce related risks in the future.*



**Arson fires appear to be on the rise again**. While data is still being compiled preliminary statistics suggest a significant increase in arson related events in 2020. At first this may not be a surprise given the many nightly news scenes of rioters around burned-out police cruisers and the social media clips of rogue arson attempts on various government buildings. No doubt these incidents have contributed to that rise, but most experts are leaning toward a cultural shift that is more predictable, especially in the wake of the pandemic-triggered economic downturn.

The consensus among these experts is that the rise in arsons in 2020 is a near-replay of the despair that we saw in the 2008 economic crisis. In both economic environments businesses turn down, buildings get boarded-up, jobless rates increase, utilities are cut, people are forced from their homes, etc.

Political and socioeconomic pressures squeeze public safety forces specifically designed to identify and protect against the inherent risk and safety concerns. While that's happening homeless camps grow, mental health circumstances decline, business and residents reach a breaking point, crime increases, insurance fraud (including arson) surges, civic organizations burst at the seams as people search for food/heat/shelter, squatting in abandoned buildings increases as non-traditional methods to stay warm too-often leads to loss of property and life.

Today's public safety provider, whether it be fire, law enforcement, or emergency services, all follow a core principle to preserve life & property, while employing highly-adaptive skills & training to the needs of the moment. These leadership qualities help to guide our communities to safety in times of crisis.
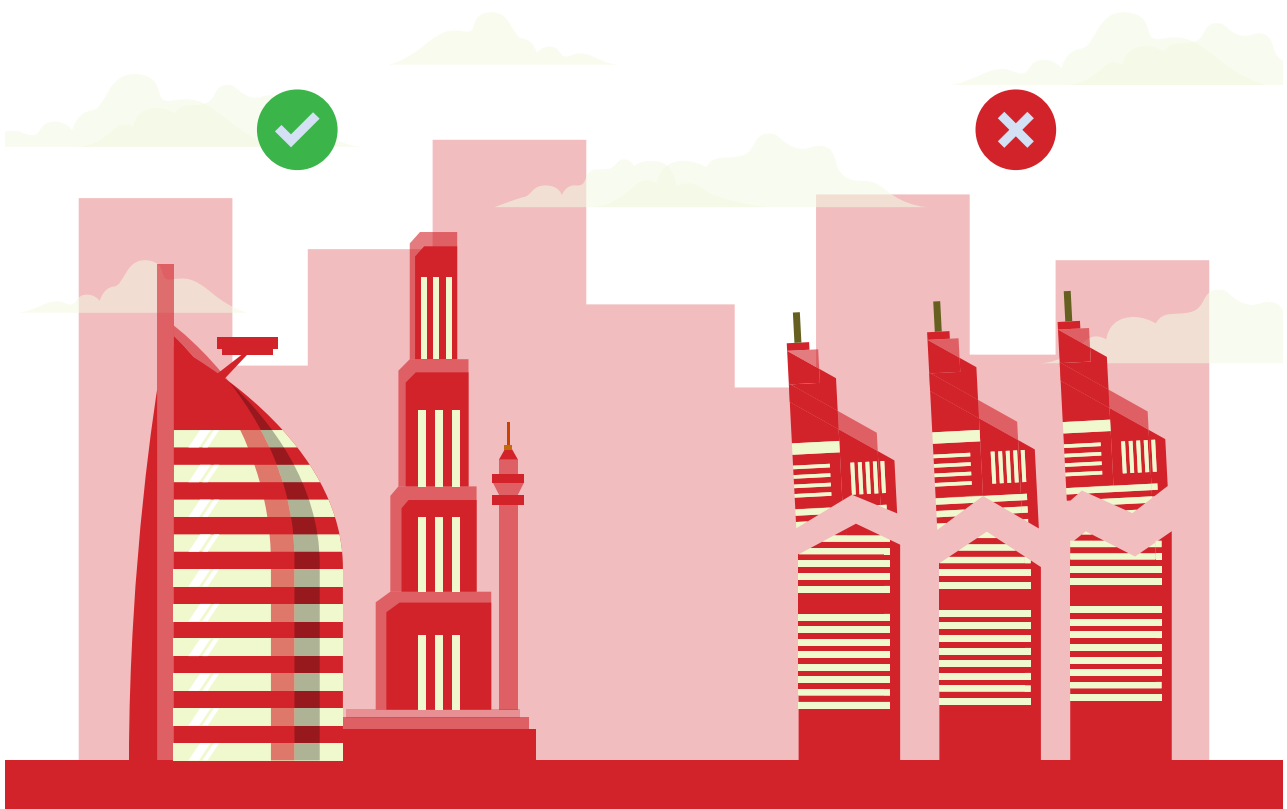
*One vital and unique aspect of leadership in the fire service is in sharing successes and failures. Here are a few of the many recommendations that we've compiled in the wake of these events.*

Start with common ground. For years you've built a foundation of knowledge and communication through fire & life safety prevention and education. Once you've re-established this common bond, now you can add to it - be specific and address high-frequency problems like "The Do's and Don'ts of…" candles, space heaters, generators, cook tops & ovens, fires/fireplaces, etc..   Keep in mind that you may need to reach your most vulnerable populations in non-traditional ways (homeless shelters, food pantries, soup kitchens, grocery stores, civic organizations like Meals on Wheels, door to door, etc.). You may need to have honest conversations about mental health, motivation, physical health, regaining financial footings, locating food and housing resources, etc..

### HINT

*Be sure to track your time & effort in all of your activities & interactions during this time. Documenting your community response will serve your community and your mission in ways never imagined!*

Vacant and abandoned buildings weigh heavily on your community's risk. When a building is occupied it is vibrant with activity, reasonably maintained & compliant and secure.  All of these risks and more are financially and physically backed by the business(es). When the site becomes vacant/abandoned, that burden is largely shouldered with tax dollars by first responders. Suddenly the **risks of poor maintenance, unsecured access, decay, vagrants, elicit use, and general viability** – all of which come into focus as you consider **fires, collapses, entrapments, violence, rescues, your response in the protection of life & property, as well as that of your command and crews**. All of these issues have consequential implications for your community, all incoming responders, and importantly it has implications in how/if that site will rebound as circumstances improve.  It is in everyone's interest to ensure buildings are not abandoned, and when/if they need to be vacated that it is handled in the best possible way.

These initial considerations may help in managing/mitigating the risk of abandoned buildings in your jurisdiction:

**Recognize and educate building owners (commercial/industrial/residential) how to smartly and safely vacate a building, including proper notification of authorities.**

- Maintain contact records so you can reach owners/managers/maintenance, as well as an ordinance & process for handling abandoned buildings.

**Identify and maintain a log of vacant/abandoned buildings**

- Not knowing a building is abandoned can be a severe risk especially to first responders. At a minimum have a mechanism for identifying (for management) and alerting responders (for safety).

**Evaluate vacant/abandoned buildings**

- Determine viability. Demolition may be a consideration.

**Train Fire Department staff to perform abandoned building evaluations and develop pre-incident plans**

- Typically preplanning a building assumes that it will be occupied. Infinite Command provides a template to help standardize the vital points in pre-planning an abandoned building.

**Identify and inform public, public safety & code enforcement**

- Alert first-due and AID responders, Inform code enforcement for management & education.
- Notify community/neighbors for assistance through programs like neighborhood watch.

## *OUR MISSION*

*The core mission is to serve and ensure the safety of your community and thus that of your crews.*

Infinite Command provides powerful and flexible tools to organize and manage your community interactions & activities, as well as specialized staff training. In fact, with **Infinite Command's powerful & flexibly interoperable solutions, you can incorporate all of your risk and crisis management tools, staff events, incident reporting, and innovative response tools for situational awareness into one cohesive system.** Infinite Command's broadly-accepted standards-based site management tools deliver absolute simplicity and efficiency in identification, mitigating risk in your community, and alerting all incoming responders when seconds count.