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Special Report:

Data Sources On The Incidence
On Arson In Illinois

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ACQUISITIONS

Data on the incidence of arson in Illinois are not available from any single source or in any single form, and a thorough statewide analysis of arson necessitates the use of many sources. This report discusses several sources of data on arson in Illinois, concentrating on the following areas:

- incidents of arson known to the police;
- suspected arson incidents;
- police and court actions;
- corrections information;
- location of incidents.

Most of the statewide information on arson incidents known to the police can be obtained from the Illinois Uniform Crime Reports (I-UCR). The division of Fire Prevention provides supplemental information about arson and suspected arson incidents. Chicago does its own arson investigating and reporting for known and suspected incidents through the Chicago Police Department, which provides the most reliable source of information for that city. Information about trials and convictions resulting from arson arrests must be obtained from the County or Municipal Courts. Statewide information regarding persons incarcerated for arson or on parole is available from the Department of Corrections. The following discussion of these sources describes the available data, where to get them, and some of their limitations. Table 1 provides a summary of available arson statistics for 1975 and 1976.

Reported Crime and Arrest Data

The I-UCR data on arson are broken into four categories which coincide with the following offenses: 1) arson using an explosive device, 2) arson using an incendiary device, 3) possession of explosive

and/or incendiary devices, and 4) attempted arson (Illinois Revised Statutes, 1976, Chapter 38, Sections 20-1 et seq., and 8-4). The Department of Law Enforcement, Criminal Justice Information Service (DLE-CJIS) distributes many standard reports on these arson offenses. Information may be obtained for the entire state, for metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties, for criminal justice planning regions (Illinois Law Enforcement Commission regions) for law enforcement agency jurisdictions, and for Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's, a Census Bureau classification consisting of a city with 50,000 or more inhabitants, or a city plus contiguous areas with a combined population of at least 50,000, Census Bureau, 1974.) The following list is a sample of standard reports which would be of interest to a person studying arson:

- offense summaries (#UCR3940);
- police disposition reports broken into adult and juvenile categories (#UCR3940);
- offense and clearance trends (#UCR3540);
- adult and juvenile arrest trends (#UCR3420);
- twelve-month offense trends (#UCR3620);
- property analysis reports: a) dollar value destroyed (#UCR3240A),
b) dollar value destroyed at different times and places (#UCR3280D).

It is not possible to mention here all the variations of data available. The reader should contact DLE-CJIS to request specific data or to inquire about special problems. I-UCR data are available from DLE-CJIS in Springfield in computer printout form for time periods between 1972 and 1976. The office may be contacted by phone or by mail (see appendix). The data will also be available for secondary analysis from the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, Criminal Justice Information

TABLE 1

Availability of Arson Statistics: 1975 and 1976

	ILLINOIS 1975	CHICAGO	ILLINOIS 1976	CHICAGO
<u>Arson Incidents Known to Police:</u>				
Arson w/ explosive device	250	*	*	*
Arson w/ incendiary device	1464	*	*	*
Possession of expl/incen devices	55	*	*	*
Attempts: Arson	700	*	*	*
<u>Persons Arrested - Adults:</u>				
Arson w/ explosive device	8		*	
Arson w/ incendiary device	111	96	*	122
Possession of expl/incen devices	14		*	
Attempts: Arson	30		*	
<u>Persons Arrested - Juveniles:</u>				
Arson w/ explosive device	19			
Arson w/ incendiary device	160	98		137
Possession of expl/incen devices	12			
Attempts: Arson	70			
<u>Courts Data on Arson:</u>				
Number of charges filed	*	*	*	*
Number of defendants	*	*	*	*
Number of convictions	*	*	*	*
<u>Corrections Data:</u>				
Number of persons sentenced to state penal institutions	49		43	

Sources: - Arson Incidents Known to Police (Illinois): Illinois Uniform Crime Reports.

- Persons Arrested for Arson Offenses (Adults and Juveniles Illinois): Illinois Uniform Crime Reports. (Adults and Juveniles, Chicago): Chicago Police Department "Statistical Summary".

- Corrections Data on Arson (Illinois): Illinois Department of Corrections Report.

* Data not presently available

Systems (ILEC-CJIS) by January, 1978. The data in Table 2 are an example of the information available from DLE/CJIS. They are the offense summary for arson offenses in 1975 for the metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas of Illinois, and for each metropolitan county except Cook.

Information in Table 2 is subject to limitations inherent in all DLE/CJIS arson data. Since arson is not an Index crime, it is not part of the data that are regularly sorted and sent to the FBI. Therefore, DLE/CJIS compiles the data as a special request, and this may take weeks to do. In addition, DLE/CJIS does not receive complete and accurate crime data from all local law enforcement agencies, even though DLE is required by state law to ". . . be a central repository and custodian of crime statistics for the state and it shall have all power incident thereto to carry out the purpose of this Act. . ." (Illinois Revised Statutes, 1976, Chapter 38, Section 206-8). The Chicago Police Department does not report arson offense data to DLE/CJIS.

The researcher may work around these limitations by consulting additional sources, although it must be kept in mind that no data source on arson is complete or perfectly accurate. The information missing from I-UCR due to under-reporting from areas outside of Chicago would be very difficult to obtain without contacting the individual agencies. Supplemental data may be obtained from other sources, the Office of the State Fire Marshal, Department of Law Enforcement, for example. This office investigates arson incidents and suspicious fires throughout the state (excluding Chicago). It compiles information on the number, nature (method of arson, damage done, etc.), and location of suspected and confirmed arson incidents. Arson incidents known to police are not known for Chicago (see Table 1) because the Chicago Police Department does not release crime incidence statistics for arson offenses.

TABLE 2

Arson offenses reported to police, actually occurred, cleared by arrest,
and total clearances for Metro Counties, 1975:

Totals for Metro. Counties	offenses reported	actually occurred	cleared by arrest (adult/juv)	total clearances
arson expl. dev.	1039	1012	82/112	236
arson incen. dev.	910	886	72/98	207
poss. exp/inc dev	24	23	4/5	10
attempt: arson	424	410	15/46	84
<u>County totals (all offenses except "attempts" combined)</u>				
Winnebago				
total	55	52	9/5	14
attempts	22	22	2/3	5
DuPage				
total	186	177	9/45	58
attempts	80	80	2/13	18
Kane				
total	87	85	3/5	20
attempts	23	22	2/1	5
Lake				
total	100	99	10/11	22
attempts	65	62	3/17	29
McHenry				
total	34	34	7/6	14
attempts	14	12	0/1	2
Will				
total	142	140	3/11	15
attempts	50	48	0/4	5
Henry				
total	5	5	2/0	2
attempts	1	1	0/0	0
Rock Island				
total	22	21	3/3	7
attempts	6	6	0/0	2
Peoria				
total	83	83	3/3	6
attempts	33	32	1/1	3

TABLE 2 (cont'd).

	offenses reported	actually occurred	cleared by arrest (adult/juv)	total clearances
Tazewell				
total	4	3	0/1	2
attempts	5	5	1/3	4
McLean				
total	16	16	2/2	14
attempts	2	2	0/1	1
Sangamon				
total	45	45	4/1	6
attempts	8	7	3/0	3
Macon				
total	62	59	11/11	23
attempts	11	10	0/1	1
Champaign				
total	43	42	7/3	14
attempts	7	6	0/0	1
Madison				
total	82	80	6/5	15
attempts	48	48	0/1	2
St. Clair				
total	73	71	3/0	4
attempts	49	47	1/0	3
<u>Totals for Non-Metro Counties</u>				
total	199	194	32/19	57
attempts	96	92	5/4	16

Source: Illinois Department of Law Enforcement printouts for 1975.

A special request for such data must be submitted to the Chicago Police Commissioner and compliance is not guaranteed. Table 3 is an example of data obtained by such a special request from the Center for Studies in Criminal Justice. It shows that the number of arson homicides increased drastically in 1976.

TABLE 3

Number of Homicides in Chicago due to Arson for the years: 1965-1976

	'65	'66	'67	'68	'69	'70	'71	'72	'73	'74	'75	'76
Number of homicides due to arson.	21	4	3	9	4	8	6	7	3	6	3	45

Source: Chicago Police Department data compiled by the University of Chicago, Center for Studies in Criminal Justice.

Courts Data

Number of charges filed, number of defendants, and number of persons convicted for arson offenses in Chicago and Illinois are not available (see Table 1) because courts data are dispersed throughout twenty-one circuit courts, each of which records aggregated total indictments but not number of defendants or convictions. Depending upon the outcome of indictments, arson cases may be terminated at the municipal court level and not be included in circuit court data. Therefore, these types of data can be obtained only through a concentrated, lengthy search through each court's files.

The best source of court related information on arson cases for any Illinois county is the Case History Report made out for each case by the Criminal Division of each Circuit Court. It details the actions taken by the court in arson cases (e.g., fine, probation, imprisonment, discharge, acquittal, continuance, etc). These reports are not aggregate data, however, they must be researched case by case at the Circuit Court office. They also do not provide information on cases disposed of in Municipal Courts.

DLE/CJIS has some court data on its computer files. However, these data are extremely scanty due to local agency non-reporting. This data set may be improved in the future, but the current data should not be relied upon for research.

Records of criminal arson indictments that go to trial are kept at the Cook County Circuit Court. This Court publishes information on arson indictments, but data on arson convictions are available only in individual case files. Data in Table 4 are arson indictment and information data which are available for Chicago in the annual report of the Administrative Office of the Illinois courts. Municipal Courts handle many arson cases,

TABLE 4

Arson Indictments And InformationCircuit Court of Cook County: 1973 - 1975

	# of Indictments and Informations		# of Defendants	
	Attempt Arson	Arson	Attempt Arson	Arson
1973	4	37	4	42
1974	2	31	3	35
1975	8	35	10	43

Source: "Annual Report to the Supreme Court of Illinois,"
Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts.

but they do not compile aggregate data on them.

Corrections Data

Information on incarcerated arsonists is available from the Illinois Department of Corrections' Corrections Information System, in the DOC-1 reports. This report includes figures on the number of persons incarcerated, by crime type, in each state institution, as well as the number of persons on parole by crime type. Number of incarcerated arsonists from a particular county, city or circuit is not available without an extensive search of court or corrections files.

Summary

This report does not include an exhaustive list of sources of information on arson in Illinois. The sources mentioned are, however, those most reliable and readily available. Additional kinds of data--the nature of the incident, injuries, costs to victims and fire departments, extent of damage done, and the like--are available from these and other sources: the Insurance Service Office, the National Fire Protection Association, and the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration. The appendix to this report lists the names, addresses, and/or phone numbers of local data sources mentioned above.

The limited accessibility and reporting of Arson data in Illinois renders a thorough study of that crime almost impossible. The researcher must keep the limitations of the data in mind, and must make use of a variety of data sources. The problem is not that data on arson do not exist. It is certain that when a case of arson becomes known to police, or when arson is suspected, the information pertaining to that case will be recorded somewhere. The problem lies in the collection and organization of data on the statewide level. There is no one place where a person may find complete information on arson in Illinois. State law,

as was noted above, requires that such a facility exist, and the following excerpt from the Civil Administration Code reinforces this argument. It is the duty of DLE to ". . . Keep a record, as may be required by law, of all fires occurring in the state, together with all facts, statistics, and circumstances, including the origin of the fires, and undertake such other identification, information, laboratory, statistical, or registration activities as may be required by law." (Illinois Revised Statutes, 1976, Chapter 127, Section 55a). The fact remains that arson data are not uniformly reported to DLE-CJIS. There is no efficient, enforceable data collection system in Illinois which would enhance uniform reporting and provide a central data source for arson. Until such a system evolves, research on crime in Illinois will always be problematic and tedious.

REFERENCES

Illinois

1976 Illinois Revised Statutes, Chapters 38 and 127.

United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census
1974 Statistical Abstract of the United States. Washington,
D.C.: United States Government Printing Office.

13th Judicial Circuit
LaSalle County Courthouse
Ottawa, Illinois 61350

14th Judicial Circuit
1536 - 26th Ave.
Rock Island, Illinois 61201

15th Judicial Circuit
Lee County Courthouse
Dixon, Illinois 61021

16th Judicial Circuit
Kane County Courthouse
Geneva, Illinois 60134

17th Judicial District
Winnebago County Courthouse
Rockford, Illinois 61101

18th Judicial District
DuPage County Courthouse
Wheaton, Illinois 60817

19th Judicial District
2134 Ash Street
Waukegan, Illinois 60085

20th Judicial Circuit
New County Building
10 Public Square
Belleville, Illinois 62220

Circuit Court of Cook County
Richard J. Daley Center
Chicago, Illinois 60602;

- Criminal Justice Information Service Division, Department of Law Enforcement, 1035 Outer Park Drive, Springfield, 217-782-7980;
- Criminal Justice Information Systems, Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, 120 S. Riverside Plaza, Chicago, 312-454-1560;
- Illinois Corrections Information System, Department of Corrections, 201 Armory Building, Springfield, 217-782-6963;
- Insurance Services Office of Illinois, 175 W. Jackson, Chicago, 312-427-2520;
- State of Illinois Department of Law Enforcement, Division of Fire Prevention, 610 Armory Building, Springfield, 217-782-7980.

Appendix

Arson Data Sources

- Chicago Bomb and Arson Squad, Chicago Police Department,
312-744-6273;
- Illinois Circuit Courts:
 - 1st. Judicial Circuit
Williamson County Court House
Marion, Illinois 62959
 - 2nd. Judicial Circuit
Carmi, Illinois 62821
 - 3rd. Judicial circuit
Madison County Courthouse
Edwardsville, Illinois 62025
 - 4th. Judicial Circuit
P.O. Box 235
Pana, Illinois 62557
 - 5th. Judicial Circuit
Edgar County Courthouse
Decatur, Illinois 62522
 - 7th. Judicial Circuit
County Building
Springfield, Illinois 62701
 - 8th. Judicial Circuit
Courthouse
Quincy, Illinois 62301
 - 9th Judicial Circuit
P.O. Box 765
Galesburg, Illinois 61401
 - 10th Judicial Circuit
Peoria County Courthouse
Peoria, Illinois 61602
 - 11th Judicial Circuit
Logan County Courthouse
Lincoln, Illinois 62656
 - 12th Judicial Circuit
Joliet, Illinois 60434

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