

COMMON QUESTIONS

Is it normal for my child to play with fire?

While curiosity about fire is common the use of fire by children is a very dangerous behavior. Children must be told and shown that matches and lighters are tools, not toys.

Is Firesetting a phase my child will grow out of?

Interest come and go; however, misuse of fire causes injury and/or damage. Immediate steps must be taken to address the behavior and bring it to a stop!

How can I deter my child from lighting fires?

Education for all involved is the key.

- Parent/Caregivers need to learn how to limit the child's access to ignition sources
- Parents/Caregivers need to supervise children and be responsible for placing ignition items within a child's reach
- Children need to know how to make appropriate decision regarding matches/lighters. Know the rules such as: matches/lighters are a tool, not a toy, always tell an adult where they are, and to report the misuse of fire.

Where do I take my child if I suspect they are using fire inappropriately?

San Bernardino County Fire Department has trained Prevention Officers throughout the County that can provide intervention for your child. After a visit by the Prevention Officer they will

SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

- Install and maintain smoke alarms and fire extinguishers
- Plan and practice home fire escape drills
- Regularly inspect your home for fire hazards
- Always use "safety sense" when making or using fire



KNOW 2 WAYS OUT



"Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you"

Robert Fulgham

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Juvenile Firesetters: Curious or Troubled



Education is the key to
knowledge!



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Juvenile Firesetting: The Whole Story

Juvenile arrests for firesetting hit an all-time high last year. In fact, arson has become the top teen and pre-teen crime in America. The National Fire Protection Association reports more than half of the 500,000 arson fires set in the United States each year are started by people 18 years old and younger.

Children set fires for many reasons. If a child plays with fire that does not mean they are a problem child. When children have repeated and intentional fire starting behaviors fascination becomes a problem. Through education, and in some cases counseling, children and their families can be given the skills to change this dangerous behavior. Studies show that fires started by children playing with matches and lighters are the leading cause of fire deaths for pre-school children and account for more than 1/3 of their fire deaths.



Types of Juvenile Firesetters:

CURIOSITY FIRESSETTERS

Usually are 2-7 year olds whose fascination with fire leads them to “play” with it to learn about it. They do not understand fire’s destructive potential. They need fire prevention education and supervision to channel their interests to safer activities.

DELINQUENT FIRESSETTER

The delinquent firesetter is responding to peer pressure and acting without thinking about the consequences of their actions. They need to take responsibility for their actions with fire prevention education and community service that is court mandated.

CRISIS FIRESSETTER

The crisis firesetter is sending a “cry for help” with their firesetting, because they are unable to cope with some trauma or stress. They need supportive fire prevention education and counseling to help them learn safer ways to cope with problems.

PATHOLOGICAL FIRESSETTER

The emotionally disturbed child uses the power of fire to compensate for feelings of helplessness. They need intensive treatment in a secure hospital or residential program.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

- Teach juveniles that matches are a tool, not a toy
- Fire is dangerous and unpredictable. It is hot, fast, dark, and the smoke/gases will kill you first!
- Keep all matches/lighters out of the reach of juveniles—even infants can use a lighter
- Never leave items cooking, burning, or left unattended
- Teach juveniles to tell you when they see matches/lighters. Never allow them to pick them up and bring to you or to light items around the house.

For more information on juvenile firesetters contact the Community Safety Division at 909-386-8427.

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