



Practice Alert

Children and Fire Safety

Children playing with fire cause hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries each year. Preschoolers are most likely to start these fires, typically by playing with matches and lighters, and are most likely to die from them.

Safety Tips

- Store matches and lighters out of children's reach and sight, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Never use lighters or matches as a source of amusement for children, they may imitate you.
- Use only lighters designed with child-resistant features (remember child-resistant doesn't mean child-proof).
- Calmly and firmly explain to your child that matches and lighters are for adults only.
- Never leave matches or lighters in a bedroom or any place children may go without supervision.
- If you suspect your child is intentionally setting fires or fascinated with fire, seek help from your local fire department, school or community counseling agency.

Facts and Figures

- In 2002, children playing with fire started an estimated 13,900 structure fires that were reported to U.S. fire departments, causing an estimated 210 deaths, 1,250 injuries and \$339 million in direct property damage.
- Most of the people killed in child-playing fires are under age 5, and such fires are the leading cause of fire deaths among preschoolers.
- Roughly two out of every three child-playing fires and three out of four associated deaths and injuries involve matches or lighters.
- Children also start fires by playing with candles, fireworks, stoves and cigarettes.
- Among fatal home fires started by children playing, seven out of ten involve children lighting bedding, mattresses, upholstered furniture or clothing.
- Just over half of child-playing fires in the home start in a bedroom.
- Children who start fires may be children in crisis, with the fires acting as cries for help from stressful life experiences or abuse, according to studies of fire-setting behavior.

NOTE: Information cited from the National Fire Protection Association

<http://www.nfpa.org/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=281&itemID=18271&URL=Research%20&%20Reports/Fact%20sheets/Children%20and%20fire>