

The Juvenile Fire Setting Problem

On average annually—

14,500 child-playing structure fires are reported causing:

- 130 civilian deaths
- 810 civilian injuries
- \$328 million in damage

85% of fires reported are in the home

33% of fire play are children under the age of 4

63% of fatal victims of fire play are under the age of 5

There are an estimated 3 unreported fires for every 1 reported fire

NFPA Statistics



For more information contact the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Program or your local Fire Department.



Illinois Fire Safety Alliance

Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Program

PO Box 911
Mount Prospect, IL 60056-0911
www.ifsa.org

Helpline: 847-400-4864
800-634-0911
Fax: 847-390-0920
E-mail: jfsi@ifsa.org

Parent and Guardian Information on Child Fire Setting Behavior



Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Program

What you can do!

1-800-634-0911
Helpline 847-400-4864

The Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Program is dedicated to reducing the frequency and severity of the tragedy and trauma caused by children and their fire related activities.

The Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Program is confidential and available to anyone at no cost. A trained certified interventionist, usually fire-fighters, can vary the program content based on the needs, age, maturity and understanding of the child.

Why Children Set Fires



In order to understand why fire setting behavior occurs, it is best to look at where and why children set fires. Experts believe there are two basic types of children who set fires.

Curiosity Fire Setters are usually under 7 years old who have a fascination with fire that leads to fire setting. They are seeking to find out how fire feels, how it burns, and what it does. Curiosity Fire Setters do not know the destructive potential of fire. Even though curiosity is a normal part of child development, curiosity in fire must be taken seriously.

Problem Fire Setters are generally over 5, but can be very young. Fires are set due to mild to severe emotional or mental disturbances or behaviors. A crisis in a child's life such as divorce, moving, or death could trigger fire setting behavior. Behavior traits may include poor peer relationships, cruelty to animals, and extreme mood changes.

What to Look For

- Missing lighters or matches
- Burnt matches laying around
- Scorch marks on furniture, under bed, on clothes or toys
- Recent changes in behavior
- Problems at school, learning or disciplinary problems, or truancy
- Deliberate efforts to collect fire materials
- Child expressing interest or daydreaming about fire
- Failure to get help to extinguish a fire
- Closeness in proximity to fires, first to report fires

What You Can Do

- Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children
- Explain to your child that fire is not a toy
- Plan and practice a home fire escape plan
- Install and maintain smoke alarms in your home
- Watch for signs of fire experimentation
- Set a good example of fire safe behavior



Fire Setting Myths

Myth

It was only a little fire.

Fact

A home fire can double in size every 30 seconds. A small fire can quickly become out of control.

Myth

They were only curious, not a big deal.

Fact

While curiosity is a part of normal development, fire setting is dangerous and should be addressed.

Myth

If I punish my child for fire setting, they will not set another fire.

Fact

Children need to be aware of the dangers related to unsafe fire related activity.

Myth

It is just a phase every child goes through, they will grow out of it.

Fact

Fire setting is not a phase and needs to be addressed before it gets worse.

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