



U.S. Fire Administration

Prevent Youth Firesetting

National Arson Awareness Week Media Kit

May 6-12, 2012



FEMA

Arson Awareness Week May 6-12, 2012

Prevent Youth Firesetting

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) is pleased to partner with the International Association of Arson Investigators; Safe Kids USA, USAonWatch, National Volunteer Fire Council, and the National Association of State Fire Marshals to announce the theme for the 2012 Arson Awareness Week: “Prevent Youth Firesetting.”

USFA and its partners will use the week of May 6-12 to focus public attention on the importance of a collaborative effort with fire and emergency service departments, law enforcement, mental health, social services, schools, and juvenile justice to help reduce the occurrence of juveniles engaged with fire.

Understanding Youth Firesetter Behavior

The misuse of fire has many variables, including age, motivation for firesetting behavior, type of fires set, ignition materials used to set the fire, and the child’s understanding and limitations of fire. Firesetting behavior is often a symptom of the problem and may be manifested through stress and crisis in children’s lives.

Juvenile firesetting or the misuse of fire by children isn’t necessarily arson. Myriad terms have been considered to describe the misuse of fire by kids. They include juvenile firesetting, juvenile arson, child arson, youth firesetting, fire lighting, fireplay and match play.

Judy Okulitch, the coordinator for the Oregon State Fire Marshal’s Youth Fire Prevention Intervention Program, says: “Language both reflects and molds thinking. The words we choose define our understanding of firesetting and our perceptions of juveniles displaying this behavior. Through the years, we have tried different words to better understand the intentional use of fire with children and adolescents. The word juvenile even became a problem for some. Juvenile was often shortened to ‘juve.’ A youth involved in the juvenile court system was a delinquent and that didn’t fit the mode of our youth motivated by curiosity about fire. Youth who intentionally set fires for reasons that are not appropriate, i.e., to destroy, vandalize, get revenge or show power or control over others are ‘misusing’ fire to satisfy their own needs. Likewise, the word ‘fireplay’ has outlived its usefulness. ‘Fireplay’ nor-

malized the behavior and minimizes the potential for serious consequences, making it more likely the youth with ‘firesetting behavior’ won’t get the appropriate and necessary intervention. It follows that the words we choose to describe the behavior of children and adolescents with fire drives the intervention they receive. That is why we must choose our words—carefully.”

The first National Fire Academy (NFA) course that addressed this topic was called “Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist,” receiving its title from the Juvenile Firesetting Intervention Professional Standard, which is part of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1035, *Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Fire and Life Safety Educator*. The revised course is now called “Youth Firesetting Prevention and Intervention.”

Youth Firesetting Facts

According to NFPA:

- Fires started by children playing accounted for an average of 56,300 fires with associated losses of 110 civilian deaths, 880 civilian injuries, and \$286 million in direct property damage per year between 2005 and 2009.
- Younger children are more likely to set fires in homes, while older children and teenagers are more likely to set fires outside.
- Males are more likely to engage in fireplay than females, as 83 percent of home structure fires and 93 percent of outside or unclassified fires were set by boys when age was coded as a factor.
- Lighters were the heat source in half (50 percent) of child-playing fires in homes.
- A child’s bedroom continues to account for 40 percent of child-playing home fires.

USFA’s National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) data indicate, where age was cited as a factor in a fire’s ignition by lighters or matches, that 37 percent of these fires were started by juveniles aged 10 to 17.

According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program:

- Juveniles (people under age 18) accounted for roughly 46 percent of arson arrests in 2005 to 2010.
- In 2010, 40 percent of arson arrests were juveniles, with 47.6 percent of those children under 16 years of age. Arrests of juveniles for the crime of arson were higher, proportionally, than for any other crime.
- Juveniles were involved in 34.3 percent of arson offenses cleared, which was the highest percentage of all offense clearances involving only juveniles.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) reports that from 2000 to 2009:

- There were 1,637 juvenile-involved fire incidents reported in the Bomb Arson Tracking System.
- More than half of these fires (56 percent or 909 incidents) were classified as arson.
- Twenty-nine percent (or 476 incidents) were classified as accidental, and 15 percent (or 251 incidents) were classified as undetermined.
- The total dollar damage reported for these fires is estimated at more than \$75 million.

What Families Can Do to Be Fire Safe

Youth firesetting is often referred to as the preventable arson.

Each year in this country, fires set by children are responsible for more than 100 fire deaths, nearly 1,000 painful burn injuries, and hundreds of millions of dollars in property loss, according to the USFA. Children are often the victims in these fires. While curiosity about fire is natural, fires set by children are dangerous and deadly.

Why Do Kids Set Fires?

The best way to understand why children set fires is to look at their motivations for firesetting. For most young kids, the motive is experimentation and curiosity. Motives can involve curiosity, a cry for help, thrill-seeking, willful intent to cause destruction, or children who suffer from mental or emotional problems.

Remember, if you suspect that your child is setting fires, you are not the only parent ever to face this problem. Contact your local fire department immediately. Explain the situation to them. Many fire departments offer youth firesetting prevention and intervention programs.

Parents, caregivers and public educators, whether they are from the fire department or the school system, can build an informed foundation by teaching fire safety at an early age. Teach children of all ages that fires, even small ones, can spread quickly.

Teaching Children Fire Safety

The most critical message for children to learn is that matches and lighters are tools, not toys! Parents should never use lighters, matches and fire for fun; children will mimic you, and when they do it unsupervised, tragic events can result. Praise your child for practicing responsible behavior and showing respect for fire. Set a good example: Use matches, lighters and fire carefully, as children will imitate positive behavior too.

- Always supervise young children.
- Never leave matches or lighters within reach of children. Keep matches and lighters out of reach in high, locked cabinets.
- Use child-resistant lighters, but remember that they are not childproof.
- Instruct young children to inform an adult if they find matches or lighters.

Home Fire Safety Tips

- Regularly inspect your home for fire hazards.
- Install and maintain working smoke alarms throughout your home.
- Plan and practice home fire-escape drills that include two ways out from every room.
- Install residential fire sprinklers in your home.

Successful Intervention Programs

There are four intervention services for the child, parent and caregiver to address youth firesetting behavior. They include services by 1) fire service; 2) mental health; 3) social services counseling; and 4) juvenile justice.

Successful Youth Firesetting Intervention Programs

Glendale (Arizona) Fire Department's Youth Firesetter Intervention Program

Firefighter/Paramedic Jason Webb shows Kross Thomas the scars from burns he received at age 13 as a result of the misuse of fire, which included hitting a hair-spray-soaked tennis ball with a flaming baseball bat. Webb recovered after more than a month in the Arizona Burn Center and 18 surgeries. Since 2004, Webb shares his story with youth firesetters as a member of the Glendale Fire Department's Youth Firesetter Intervention Program.

The Glendale Fire Department's Youth Firesetter Intervention Program provides customized educational interventions based on the availability of the family. The primary goal of the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program is to identify children at risk for participating in unsupervised firesetting incidents and then providing educational intervention in an attempt to stop the firesetting behavior. The program is offered, free of charge, to any Valley youth between the ages of 3 and 17. The lessons include fire safety education, fire science, the consequences of firesetting, burn injuries, choices, and Arizona arson and fireworks laws. The program also provides a parent education on home fire safety, the Arizona arson and fireworks laws, consequences of youth firesetting, responsibility, and decision-making.

Glendale Fire Department's Youth Firesetter Intervention Program views youth firesetting as a community problem and, as such, it deserves communitywide attention. Although fire departments may take the lead role in developing programs for children and adolescents involved in firesetting, their efforts alone will not resolve the problem. It is crucial that there be working linkage established between the various community agencies capable of helping the youth and their families. Schools, the fire service, law enforcement, youth justice, and mental health professionals must all establish open communication channels with one another so that an organized effort is mounted to reduce youth involvement in firesetting- and arson-related activities.

The program is managed by Dr. Janet A. Boberg, who played an integral role in the development of the NFA's Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist curriculum and is a contract instructor for the NFA's "Youth Firesetting Prevention and Intervention" course.

River Valley (Massachusetts) Juvenile Fire Intervention Coalition Amesbury and Merrimac, Massachusetts

The River Valley Juvenile Fire Intervention Coalition is a nonprofit educational organization and is comprised of a consortium of professionals from the mental health, criminal justice, and fire service communities, dedicated to the identification and treatment of child and adolescent firesetting behavior.

The River Valley Juvenile Fire Intervention Program's Firesetter Intervention Response and Education (FIRE) curriculum is committed to the identification and treatment of firesetting behavior in the adolescent and juvenile environment from ages 3 to 18 and sometimes into adulthood when the mental health status of the individual is appropriate.

The FIRE curriculum started as a program to augment and enhance the former Massachusetts State Wide Coalition for Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program and has evolved into a very unique and successful program that is now a stand-alone curriculum for identifying and treating the child and adolescent firesetter.

The FIRE program was developed with the added hope that a successful distinction could be realized between the traditional fire prevention programs currently being delivered to children in the schools and the fire intervention programs that are offered to children and adolescents already involved in negative fire activities.

The FIRE curriculum's hands-on style of instruction is interesting and makes the students want to learn. Live demonstrations and participation focus on the child's individual interest in fire while matching the educational intervention with the level of risk. The intervention program shows participants ways to make better decisions and understand the consequences of their actions.

The FIRE program has an extremely low recidivism rate of 4 percent. This is due, in part, to the fact that we believe training should not focus solely on firesetting but should also project a feeling of trust between the instructor and student. Listening is an important skill for the instructor as well as the student!

Before a child enters the FIRE program, a licensed mental health clinician and trained fire personnel, trained to NFPA 1035, determines the suitability of the child for this type of treatment and intervention through a screening.

Involvement in his or her own treatment creates a feeling of empowerment for the child. Classroom sessions include information on basic fire science, home-escape plans, home fire safety and prevention, the definition of arson, decision-making, consequences, parent/caregiver fire safety component, and the appropriate use of fire. An expanded lesson plan was recently developed exclusively with the Massachusetts State Police Bomb Squad for those youth involved in the use or creation of chemical reaction devices and how it pertains to new laws for such devices within Massachusetts. The River Valley Program is currently the only program in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts piloting this new material.

Hands-on sessions include fire extinguisher use (depending on the risk level and assessment by a licensed mental health professional), handling charged firehoses, understanding and using firefighter's gear, and understanding and implementing the lessons learned in the classroom about fire science, fire behavior and firefighting.

The Amesbury Fire Department program is managed by Lieutenant Jim Kukene and the Merrimac Fire Department program is administered by Michael McLeieer. McLeieer is a contract instructor for the NFA's "Youth Firesetting Prevention and Intervention" course.

Champaign (Illinois) Fire Department

Youth identified as exploring with matches and lighters, experimenting with fire, or lighting fires to vent anger or frustration may benefit from the Champaign Fire Department's (CFD's) Youth Fire Intervention Program.

CFD's Youth Fire Intervention Unit provides age-appropriate intervention and fire safety education to youth and caretakers when a child appears unusually interested in fire and/or exhibits unsafe fire behaviors. CFD's trained and caring youth fire experts aid children, parents and caretakers with timely screening and education. Referrals to the program often come from parents, teachers, administrators, youth services counselors, police or juvenile justice officers.

Last year, CFD's Youth Fire Intervention Program, which has been in existence for nearly three decades, underwent an extensive review of strategic plans to include updating partnerships with new contacts including local and county mental health care providers, school discipline deans, and local, county, and state juvenile officers. Awareness training was provided for members of the CFD's Investigation Unit along with the revision of departmental standard operating guidelines.

The coalition building and community education components continue with a media campaign to be rolled out in the fall of 2012. With a firm foundation of resource and information about the program out in the community, Champaign's Youth Fire Intervention Unit is prepared for an upswing in identified youth needing such services. Last year, the team provided screening and education to seven youth and caretakers with two referrals to Champaign County's mental health care providers. Data in early 2000 showed an annual average of 30 youth receiving intervention services.

Youth identified as exploring with matches and lighters, experimenting with fire, or lighting fires to vent anger or frustration will benefit from CFD's Youth Fire Intervention Program.

Newton (New Hampshire) Juvenile Fire Intervention Program

It is the mission of the Newton Juvenile Fire Intervention Program to reduce the incidence of fire and related casualties within the community by establishing a continuum of care in Rockingham County for youth and the family of youth who misuse fire.

This community-based program focuses on developing a standardized approach for early identification of youth who misuse fire, as well as building a resource network for intervention and treatment of youth with fire-misuse behavior.

Coalition partners include fire service, law enforcement, criminal justice, schools and social service agencies in servicing the needs of youth in their communities. Parents, judges, guidance counselors, police officers and youth workers rely on the program to strengthen and improve families' ability to make healthy and safe decisions and reduce involvement with the juvenile justice system.

The Newton program directs its residents, "If your child or a young person you know has set a fire, you must get help immediately to keep your family or neighborhood safe from fire!" The site states that research shows that (1) children are curious about fire; even toddlers can start a fire with a match or lighter; (2) each year, children are seriously burned or die from playing with matches or lighters; (3) parents need to take their child's curiosity about fire seriously; and (4) children who are curious about fire can be helped with fire education.

The Newton Fire Intervention Program serves youth ages 3 to 16. Through a screening, educational component, and fire intervention needs assessment, area children and teens are held accountable for fire-misuse behavior while linking youth and families with appropriate community resources to reduce the likelihood of a repeat incident. When concerns arise about fire misuse or firesetting behavior, the Newton Fire Department is the regional contact and will screen the youth to determine the best level of services for the youth and family.

Once the screening is completed, the fire department office will determine the next steps for the youth, which may include participation in an educational program and/or a needs assessment.

Two education programs are offered based on the age of the child. Young children (ages 3 to 6) generally attend a three-session program, while older youth (ages 6 to 16) attend a total of eight sessions.

The fire department may choose to refer the youth for a fire intervention needs assessment. The initial appointment will be 60-90 minutes for the parent or guardian only; the juvenile should not accompany the parent or guardian to this appointment.

Three additional sessions will take place with the juvenile (and the parent or guardian, when appropriate). These additional sessions will be up to 50 minutes in length, and the parent or guardian must accompany juveniles to these additional appointments.

As part of the needs assessment, the child's teacher and/or guidance counselor will be contacted. Once the assessment is completed, written recommendations will be discussed with the parents and the youth, as appropriate, and will also be submitted to the fire department.

The problem of juvenile firesetting is gaining increasing attention. Children account for a startling number of fires in the Newton area and, all too often, are the victims of the fires they set. Firesetting behavior is progressive and, if left untreated, has an 81 percent probability of being repeated. The Newton Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program is an interagency effort designed to identify, assess and intervene with children who start, play with or witness firesetting at the earliest stages. Firesetting is a complex series of different behaviors, and the Newton program links the resources of many local agencies to identify, refer, assess and provide appropriate treatment to children who set fires.

Sacramento Valley (California) Juvenile Firesetter Program

The goal of the Sacramento Valley Juvenile Firesetter Program is to reduce the devastating effects of juvenile firesetting by providing assistance and support to the community by assessment, intervention, education and referral for counseling for juvenile firesetters and their families.

The Sacramento Valley Juvenile Firesetter Program is open to any child (ages 3 to 17) living within the parameters of the agencies sponsoring this program. A child that causes or was involved with causing a fire can be referred to the fire or burn agency that has jurisdiction of the area where the child set the fire or was found involved in fire use. Referrals may come from a concerned parent, neighbor, teacher, fire investigator, counselor or the Sacramento County Juvenile Probation Department.

The Sacramento Valley Juvenile Firesetter Program is comprised of five steps, including referral, assessment, pre-enrollment hearing, education and counseling.

Upon referral of information regarding a juvenile firesetter, that family is contacted by the fire or burn agency having jurisdiction, and the family is provided with information about the parents' or guardians' responsibilities in the program. After this initial contact, the procedures of the four components of the program begin.

Families entering this program are classified into one of three different categories: voluntary, fire agency diversion, or court referral. Depending upon which category a family fits into, the program requirements may differ.

The program component referred to as assessment is completed in the early stages of the program and is the first component of the program. Families entering the program voluntarily, by citation or court referral must participate in this component. The assessment gives the fire agency interviewer the opportunity to assess the firesetting behavior and the conditions that led/allowed the fire incident to take place and then make specific recommendations to the youth and the parent/guardian. The interview or assessment is conducted under guidelines developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) USFA.

If the family has entered the program due to a child receiving a "citation with intent to defer," a diversion

hearing will be required by the fire agency issuing the citation. The purpose of the hearing is to determine the child's suitability to remain outside of the scope of the juvenile justice system while participating in the program.

When the assessment and, if necessary, the diversion-hearing steps are completed, and indications show the participating family should be enrolled in the safety academy, the program's official education component begins. The sessions cover a number of fire and life safety subjects, plus communication and family skills. These sessions will include guest speakers, activities and homework. All of those attending the fire safety academy are placed in age- and behavior-appropriate classes. All sessions must be attended to complete the academy.

A referral for counseling is another component of the program. The fire district interviewer may determine from the assessment process that family counseling is necessary to reduce unfavorable conditions affecting the youth. A counseling resource packet obtained from county probation is provided and reviewed with the family to highlight a plan to enroll the child/youth into counseling. If the family is referred by juvenile probation, a written referral may be sent to the probation whereby court-ordered counseling services may need to be obtained.

Should family counseling be recommended, the participating family will not attend the fire safety academy until such counseling has come to an end and/or the counseling program's clinical director has approved the child's or youth's attendance.

After completing the fire safety academy and/or counseling, the program may contact the adults to determine the status of the child's behavior in regard to the following: occurrences of firesetting, school work, family communication, activities with peers, and whether the home environment shows a reduced risk in the child obtaining instruments used for firesetting.

University of Michigan Trauma Burn Center's Straight Talk Youth Fire Prevention and Intervention Program

Straight Talk is a family-oriented program targeting youth who exhibit behaviors associated with the misuse of fire (playing with matches or lighters, using accelerants, firesetting, fireworks, bottle bombs, arson, etc.). It is also for youth who have observed others playing with fire or who are at risk for experimentation.

Research-based methods and a multidisciplinary approach are used to address the myriad factors contributing to the complex issue of firesetting behavior. Firefighters, arson police, social workers, injury prevention nurses, occupational therapists, lab personnel and burn survivors discuss the medical, social, legal, future/career and financial consequences associated with the misuse of fire. Parent (or legal guardian) participation is a mandatory, essential component of the program.

Straight Talk employs principles of cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing as fundamental methods to promote behavior change. The comprehensive curriculum emphasizes individual accountability, responsibility, good decision-making, and problem-solving skills to positively redirect at-risk youth. Identification and treatment of mental health issues that may be contributing to a child's high-risk behavior is a priority focus. Youth/Families receive interactive education and techniques to promote a safe home environment and prevent injuries. Straight Talk is a statewide and regional resource that is provided to families for free.

Straight Talk is proven as a highly effective youth firesetting intervention program. Published in the medical literature *Journal of Trauma*, results from our prospective research study demonstrated the recidivism rate for Straight Talk participants was 0.8 percent (less than 1 percent) versus 36 percent in the matched cohort group who did not attend the program.

Ongoing, active collaboration and partnerships with multiple fire service and community agencies has been key to Straight Talk's lasting success. Since the initial program development and launch with Bloomfield Township Fire Department in 1999, numerous municipal fire departments have assisted in teaching the program, updating curriculum content, and providing supplemental comprehensive family intervention in the community. Straight Talk is widely used and endorsed by fire departments, juvenile courts, police departments, schools, Michigan Fire Inspectors Society, Michigan Arson Prevention Committee, parents, youth assistance, and other social service and community agencies.

Two unique educational intervention tools were developed by Straight Talk's multidisciplinary team of experts to expand prevention efforts to a larger target audience. Both of these nationally acclaimed resources are available to youth fire prevention and intervention programs throughout the United States:

1. “In An Instant” — a multiple award-winning educational documentary video that effectively demonstrates the medical and social consequences associated with misuse of fire by sharing the journey of youth and their families during burn treatment and recovery.
2. “Sean’s Story” — Sean, a convicted juvenile arsonist, shares his story so viewers can witness firsthand the lifelong negative impact that fire-setting can have on youth/parents’ reputation, education, career, family relationships, finances, incarceration and injury to self and others. Experts from law enforcement, juvenile court, and health care provide insight into fire-misuse behavior and consequences that youth and their parents typically do not consider. Youth who misuse fire can be helped by early intervention. This is a poignant film that explicitly demonstrates the long-term consequences that can occur if fire-misuse behavior is left untreated. The NFA has selectively chosen to incorporate the video in the newly updated national NFA/FEMA Youth Firesetting Prevention and Intervention curriculum. FEMA has also provided grant funding to distribute “Sean’s Story” nationwide as a firesetting intervention and prevention resource toolkit for fire departments, agencies, injury prevention programs, and schools.

Texas Department of Insurance — State Fire Marshal’s Office Fire Prevention and Intervention Program

The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) State Fire Marshal’s Office’s Fire Prevention and Intervention Program was initiated on a state level to assist in the establishment of community-based juvenile fire awareness and intervention programs, now more accurately called youth fire prevention and intervention programs, in which local fire departments take the lead.

An advisory team comprised of fire prevention professionals in existing juvenile intervention programs helped develop a “model” intervention program that can be easily adapted to meet the individual needs of fire departments throughout the state.

The model is based on the USFA’s program, programs from other states, and existing programs within Texas. Team members also helped develop a workshop to train fire department personnel in the use of the model program and related topics.

In 2000, the NFPA added new chapters to Standard 1035, outlining the job performance requirements for the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I and Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist II. In 2005, NFPA made changes to the standard and revised the chapters on Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist to reflect current practice within the field.

Assistance is also extended to existing programs by providing information, material, and technical support and by providing a vehicle for networking among the various local programs throughout the state. If your department already has a Youth Fire Prevention and Intervention Program (YFPIP), please join our statewide network.

The website provides contact information for a myriad YFPIPS in Texas.

Texas designed the YFPIP Database. Because there is almost no in-depth information about children and youth who set fires or play with fire tools in Texas, the State Fire Marshal’s Office and TDI designed the YFPIP Database Program to facilitate the collection and maintenance of records about juveniles participating in local YFPIPs.

Users of this database program can report information about the incidents and the juveniles, including items such as types of residential environments and relationships to persons exerting a significant influence on their behavior, referral sources, and service providers, to the State Fire Marshal’s Office. Identifying elements such as names, addresses, telephone numbers and Social Security numbers are maintained only on the local level and not transmitted to the state level. Users can run 27 different built-in reports and are offered the mechanism for additional custom queries.

The YFPIP is managed by Deborah Johnson who received her juvenile firesetter intervention training from the NFA.

State of Florida Juvenile Firesetter Prevention and Intervention Program

Firesetting is a growing problem across the state of Florida. It represents the highest cause of home deaths among children and the second leading cause of all fatal home accidents.

The primary goal of the Florida Juvenile Firesetter Prevention and Intervention Program is to inform community members on how they can work together with the associated agencies and Florida county juvenile firesetter intervention programs to create a supportive system to reduce the incidences of juvenile firesetting.

The mission of the Juvenile Firesetter Prevention and Intervention Program is to protect communities from the dangers of a juvenile firesetter. Our goal is to identify and engage youthful arson offenders and at-risk children and their families and involve them in fire safety prevention, education and intervention services. Our objective is to reduce juvenile firesetting across the state of Florida. Programs are designed to work in cooperation with the juvenile court system and the various counseling and mental health agencies in each county.

The StopFiresetting.com website is designed to provide an accessible, statewide database and reporting system for juvenile-set fires. We are helping local communities determine the extent of the problem and helping policymakers, social service and public safety agencies direct resources to serve child firesetters and their families more efficiently.

The website is also a portal that contains appropriate juvenile firesetter intervention and fire and life safety activities for a variety of age groups. The site includes general facts about juvenile firesetting and the Florida Juvenile Fire Safety Middle School Curriculum Program.

Resources for Youth Firesetter Intervention Specialists

National Fire Academy Training

A juvenile firesetter intervention specialist works directly with juveniles, conducting interviews to determine an appropriate intervention strategy.

In 2000, NFPA added a Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist component to the existing Fire and Life Safety Educator 1035 Standard. This professionalization of the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist led

to many state and local organizations addressing the position and, in many cases, the problem of juvenile firesetting for the first time.

USFA's NFA developed the Juvenile Firesetter Specialist Intervention curriculum as a result of this emerging standard. The NFPA 1035 Standard was revised in 2005 and again in 2010. The NFA courses were revised accordingly, reflecting the changes in the NFPA 1035 Standard.

The Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Professional Standard, like many NFPA Professional Standards, is divided into sections. Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Professional I is for the individual who will work directly with the juvenile, conduct the interview, and implement the appropriate intervention strategy. Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Professional II is for the individual who will coordinate juvenile firesetting intervention program activities and often manage the program.

“Youth Firesetting Prevention and Intervention” (R0629)

This six-day NFA course provides students with knowledge and skills necessary to identify children and adolescents involved in firesetting. The course addresses how to establish programs to meet the needs of these youths and their families. Skills essential to meet the Juvenile Firesetting Intervention Professional Standard, which is part of NFPA 1035, are discussed and practiced throughout the course. Read the course description here.

The course framework guides practitioners through the process of developing a comprehensive strategy to combat the misuse of fire and incendiary devices by juveniles. The course focuses on how identification, intake, screening, disposition and follow-up are used to mitigate youth firesetting behavior. It also empowers students with knowledge on how to develop, implement and evaluate a youth firesetting prevention and intervention program. Students visit a local residential treatment program for youth firesetting.

Coffee Break Training

- Firesetting by Children and Adolescents (PDF, 377 kilobytes (KB)).
- Factors Influencing Youth Firesetting Behavior (PDF, 359KB).
- Myths and Facts about Children and Fire (PDF, 365KB).

National Fire Incident Reporting System: Arson and Juvenile Firesetter Module

Data is an indispensable tool in the war against arson. The ability to identify when and where the crime takes place, what form it takes, and the characteristics of its targets and perpetrators is crucial. Armed with such information, fire service and law enforcement agencies can develop and implement arson prevention initiatives, allowing them to use their resources in the most efficient and effective manner.

The NFIRS 5.0 Arson Module (NFIRS-11) was developed and released in 1999 with this goal in mind.

The optional Arson Module may be used whenever the cause of ignition (NFIRS-2 E1) is coded as “intentional” or as “under investigation,” without a distinction as to whether or not a crime has occurred or a determination of criminal intent. The Arson Module can also be used in cases where the cause is “undetermined after investigation.”

In addition, the Arson Module can be used to document juvenile-set fires, whether determined to be intentional, unintentional or under investigation. This information will permit analysis of juvenile firesetting trends, including intervention strategies and repeated activity.

The Arson Module consists of two parts: a local investigation module, which permits a fire department or arson investigation unit to document certain details concerning the incident, and a juvenile firesetter section, which identifies key items of information that could be used for local, state and national intervention programs.

The NFIRS Arson Module is not intended to replace arson information management systems used by fire and law enforcement units, but to identify data elements that could be exported to NFIRS and be included as an integral part of the USFA’s National Fire Database and the ATF’s National Repository.

For more information on the Arson and Juvenile Firesetter Module, see Unit 11 of the “NFIRS 5.0 Self-Study Course” (Q0494) and Chapter 13 of the NFIRS Reference Guide (PDF, 7 megabytes (MB)).

Publications

- Youth Firesetting: What You Can Do (572KB).
- Juvenile Firesetting — A Growing Concern Spanish (PDF, 663KB).
- Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Handbook (PDF, 5.9MB).
- Fire Risk to Children in 2007 (PDF, 370KB) Topical Fire Research Series, Vol. 11, Issue 9, February 2011.
- School Fires (PDF, 657KB) Topical Fire Research Series, Vol. 8, Issue 1, August 2007.
- Arson and Juveniles Responding to the Violence: Special Report (PDF, 599KB).
- National Juvenile Firesetter/Arson Control and Prevention Program (PDF, 1.9MB).
- Fires Ignited by Lighters and Matches (PDF, 145KB) Topical Fire Research Series, Vol. 4, Issue 1, October 2004.
- Matches and Lighters Poster (PDF, 458KB).