

FACT SHEET



What Can I Do - If I Find My Child is *Playing* with Fire?

A Child under the age of 16, who plays with fire, is generally referred to as a juvenile fire setter. A juvenile fire setter may be any child who plays with fire, lights a match, flicks a lighter or may act out maliciously by starting fires for attention or tries to do harm to something or someone by the use of fire. Fire setters can be young or old, male or female and come from varying socio-economic backgrounds. It is very common for children to experiment with fire in a variety of ways. Playing or experimenting with fire, however, can sometimes accidentally light something on fire. Children playing with fire are at high risk to endanger themselves and others.



While playing, children at an early age may accidentally start a fire, but may not have the cognitive capability to escape from the very fire they started. Children generally have great outcomes with a minimum of excellent training on fire safety. However, the problem begins when a child has been educated about the dangers, and disciplined for their actions and still chooses to play with or light fires. It then may be necessary to find assistance from the mental health community or law enforcement.

Fine, But, What Can I Do – If I Find My Child is Playing with Fire?

- **Make sure all smoke detectors in the home are in working order.**
- **Sit down and create a home escape plan with the children and practice it with them.**
- **Locate all Matches, Lighters, Fireplace/Barbeque Fire Starters and *secure them by locking them up.* (Never purchase a novelty or toy like lighter or let a child see or play with them.)**
- **Establish a rule that your child is never to have matches or lighters.**

- Train a child as to what they should do when they find matches or a lighter on the school grounds, in a field or in the street. (Children are to never touch matches or lighters.)
- Increase supervision of fire setting children. Do not let them play alone or unsupervised in other children's homes, especially where lighters or matches might be readily available.
- It is OK to talk with the parents of your child's playmates regarding heightened supervision and the need for match and lighter security.
- Be aware and alert to any secret hiding places or hide-a-ways and check them often for fire starting materials.
- Secure by locking up all flammable liquids, lighter fluid or charcoal starter fluid (preferably away from home or garage).
- Be sure to watch your actions and be attentive to how you handle fire. *Children learn from their parents.* Never play with or make fun with fire or use fire as a joke prop. *Always be responsible when using fire.*
- If you are a smoker, keep your lighter with you at all times. Use (real and tested) child resistant lighters. (Many lighter companies claim their lighters are fire resistant... but in fact are not.)
- Fire Extinguishers should be located at or near all areas in the home where a fire may start.
- *The 9.1.1 operator* handles all Fire, Fire Safety, Police and Emergency medical calls. (Do not call 9.1.1 for answers to *Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Questions.*)
- Contact your local fire department and ask for their "Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Program (Fire Prevention Division).
- Visit the Utah State Fire Marshal's web site for more Juvenile Fire Setter information.



If you have information about fires that may have been started by juvenile fire setters or someone suspected of starting fires maliciously or with criminal intent please call:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utah State Fire Marshal's Office | <p>801-284-6350 Telephone</p> <p>801-284-6351 Fax</p> |
| <p>5272 South College Drive, Suite 302</p> | |