

CHILDREN & FIRE - A DEADLY COMBINATION

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As children's play moves from outdoor play to indoor play, with the cooling of the weather, the risk of a child setting an accidental house fire increases. Children are naturally curious about fire. However, most children do not understand the real dangers or consequences associated with fire. Children think they can control a fire, when in reality a fire can get out of hand very quickly. The consequences of just one fire incident can be devastating to a family and community. In addition to burn injury, property damage and loss of life, the child and/or their family can be held financially and legally responsible. As a parent, here are some steps you can take to help keep your child and family safe:

#1- Find out what your child knows about fire safety.

#2- Keep matches, lighters and ignition devices in a safe, secure place. Treat these items as you would a firearm. Ask your child where such items can be found around your house; you'll more than likely be surprised at what you will learn.

#3- Set clear rules and expectations about fire safety. Young children should "tell" a grown-up if they find ignition devices so adults can put them in a secure place. As children grow older they can "give" the ignition devices to an adult. When you feel it is appropriate, teach children how to use fire in a safe and appropriate manner, under adult supervision.

#4- Talk about peer pressure and what your child should do if they are around other children playing with fire. Teach them to leave the situation and report it to an adult.

#5- Talk about the real dangers and consequences associated with fire. Talk about how a fire would could change your lives and the lives of others. There can also be legal consequences that your child may be unaware of.

#6- Make sure your child is supervised. Most children who play with fire have easy access to ignition devices and are not being supervised at the time of the incident.

#7- Practice fire safety in your home. Install and maintain smoke detectors, take measures to prevent fires and develop and practice a home escape plan.

#8- Children play with fire for many reasons. Young children may set fires out of curiosity or as a cry for help. Older adolescents may set fires as a prank or dare. Whatever the motivation, early identification and intervention is critical.

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