



# Curious Kids Set Fires

A Factsheet for Teaching Children Fire Safety

**E**very day Americans experience the tragedy of fire. Each year more than 5,000 Americans die in fires and more than 25,000 are injured. Figures show that each year about 450 people are killed and \$300 million in property is destroyed in fires attributed to children playing with fire.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) encourages parents to teach children at an early age about the dangers of fireplay in an effort to prevent child injuries, fire deaths and firesetting behavior in the future. Below are some facts about children and fire safety.

## CURIOUS KIDS SET FIRES

Children under five are curious about fire. Often what begins as a natural exploration of the unknown can lead to tragedy.

- Children of all ages set over 100,000 fires annually. Approximately 25,000 of those fires are set in homes.
- Children make up between 20% - 25% of all fire deaths.
- Over 30% of the fires that kill children are set by children playing with fire.
- At home, children usually play with fire in bedrooms, in closets and under beds. These are "secret" places where there are a lot of things that catch fire easily.
- Too often, child firesetters are not given proper guidance and supervision by parents and teachers. Consequently, they repeat their firesetting behavior.

## PRACTICE FIRE SAFETY IN YOUR HOME

- Supervise young children closely. Do not leave them alone even for short periods of time.
- Keep matches and lighters in a secured drawer or cabinet.
- Have your children tell you when they find matches and lighters.
- Check under beds and in closets for burned matches, evidence your child may be playing with fire.
- Develop a home fire escape plan, practice it with your children and designate a meeting place outside.
- Take the mystery out of fire play by teaching children that fire is a tool, not a toy.
- Teach children the nature of fire. It is FAST, HOT, DARK and DEADLY!
- Teach children not to hide from firefighters, but to get out quickly and call for help from another location.
- Show children how to crawl low on the floor, below the smoke, to get out of the house and stay out in the case of fire.
- Demonstrate how to stop, drop to the ground and roll if their clothes catch fire.

- Install smoke alarms on every level in your home.
- Familiarize children with the sound of your smoke alarm.
- Test the smoke alarm each month and replace the battery at least once a year.
- Replace the smoke alarm every ten years, or as recommended by the manufacturer.

Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. And remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.



**For More Information Contact:**  
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[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)