

A SERIOUS PROBLEM THAT NEEDS SERIOUS ATTENTION

In 1995, there were 96,020 child-set fires in the United States which cost 304 fatalities, and 2,528 injuries. There was \$286.7 million dollars in property loss in residential homes alone. Children are fascinated by Fire. If this behavior does not receive some intervention, curiosity fire setting could escalate into a more troublesome problem. Children and adolescents could hurt and even kill themselves, siblings, peers, parents and firefighters; or damage and burn down their houses. The Portage Fire Department has implemented a Juvenile Firesetters Program to identify and stop children from playing with fire. Everybody needs to be aware of the problems of children playing with fire.

COULD YOUR CHILD BE PLAYING WITH FIRE?

All children from all walks of life can be discovered to be lighting fires out of curiosity, in a crisis, or even pathologically.

- Be aware of extra interest your child exhibits when around fire.
- Watch for any burned material in and around your home. If you find burned materials, question your child.
- Discuss the reason for the burning.
- Explain the powers of burning. Give examples of good fires and bad fires.
- If the fire setting continues, get help, don't wait. Call the Fire Department today!
- Fire setting may be a cry for attention or help and can be a sign of emotional instability. This does not mean that if your child exhibits these signs that he/she is a fire setter. This does mean that the potential is there and that intervention is necessary.

POWER OF PREVENTION

- Control access to lighters and matches. Lighters and matches obtained by a child should be considered to be as dangerous as a loaded gun. Keep in mind that even a two year old can operate a lighter and can climb.
- Teach children that fire is a tool, not a toy.
- Do not have children under age 10 touch matches or lighters. If old enough, closely supervise and teach children how to strike a match safely and lighters carefully.
- Always set a good example of the use of lighters, matches and fire. Children are watching close and can pick up on bad habits.
- Store flammable liquids properly and away from children.
- Protect your home by keeping your property free of fuels such as brush and rubbish.
- Always supervise a young child in a room where an open flame is present.
- Install and maintain smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.
- Plan and practice home fire escape drills.

ALL FIRES START SMALL!!!

WHY CHILDREN START FIRES?

Curiosity * Boredom * Anger * Need for attention * Trouble at home or school

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

- You** must make the call. Notify the fire department and make an appointment to discuss the incident.
- Fire department personnel will discuss the problem with both you and your child. The reason for the problem and a plan will be set into action.
- Let your child know that this is not a punishment, but an opportunity to learn about fire and the education that is offered in the program will benefit both parents and child. Other members of the program will also.
- Fires being set by children out of curiosity, a three session program, is usually sufficient to educate the normal child in fire. Each session lasts approximately one hour.
- After the educational sessions are complete, there may be several follow up contacts made to ensure that there has been no reoccurrence.

Fire department personnel are educators, not counselors.



"There is no honor in extinguishing a fire that could have been prevented."