



PreventThink Life Safety

For additional information, call 503-805-8482

Kids With Fire

It is not uncommon for children to misuse fire...play with fire. This occurs when kids are not clear about the rules regarding fire and cannot clearly understand the dangerous nature of this tool. Kids are conditioned, from a very young age, to see fire as something special and easy to control (birthday candles, fireplace fires, campfires, etc.). Fire is also naturally fascinating to almost all humans. Without the right knowledge, kids can make errors that can lead to tragic results.

Kids also misuse fire for other reasons. When they are feeling stressful or have crisis in their life or that of their family, they might begin to act out. Sometimes, they act out with fire. This is a very dangerous pattern that needs the right attention and it needs to be done quickly.

Consider the following to address firesetting behavior in kids:

- Keep matches and lighters in a safe place – Access is the number one reason kids play with fire. Keep matches and lighters safely stored, locked up if necessary.
- No Secrets – Don't make the storage location a secret. Have kids help determine a safe place and ask for their help in keeping matches and lighters there at all times. Nothing makes a child more curious than a secret.
- Set the right example – Kids will do as you do, not do what you say. They will only know how to be as careful with fire as the example you set (that's why most child fire play occurs after the July 4th Holiday...adults show them how to play with fire).
- Treat matches and lighters like tools – Matches and lighters are dangerous tools that need the same care as things like power saws, sharp knives, and loaded guns. If you store and treat them like dangerous tools, kids will learn to see them as tools.
- Teach your child about safety – Many parents say "...my child knows better!" The simple fact is, most kids do not know better because no one has taught them. Schools don't necessarily teach fire safety nor do firefighters. Talk with kids to know what they do know.
- Dangerous Firesetting – All firesetting behavior is dangerous, but when a youth begins setting fires in response to their stress or crisis, help is needed quickly. Kids may not realize why they are acting the way they do (asking them why they set a fire will likely result in "I don't know").
- Need Help? – Check www.YFIRES.com to find an intervention program near you or contact PreventThink for help.