Children and Fire

Safety Tips for Caregivers

Children "playing" with or starting fires is dangerous and costly. Each year these fires cause hundreds of injuries, millions of dollars in damage, and are most likely to kill young children under the age of 5.

Some children play with fire out of curiosity, boredom, or peer pressure, not realizing its danger. But other children misuse fire because they are struggling with problems or emotions. Without proper intervention and instruction, children who misuse fire will very likely do it again. However, if punishment is the only intervention strategy used, it could actually contribute to the problem. What can you do?

Follow these tips to keep your family safe:

- Keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children, up high, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Closely supervise children, making sure that they are kept away from other fire sources, including lit candles, cigarettes, bonfires, and stoves.
- It is natural for young children to be curious and ask questions about fire, play with fire trucks, or pretend to cook. Use these opportunities to teach them about fire safety.
- Explain that fire moves very fast and can hurt as soon as it touches them. Tell them that this is why matches and lighters are tools for adults only.
- Teach young children to never touch matches or lighters. They must go tell a grown-up when matches or lighters are found.
- Establish clear rules and consequences about unsupervised and unauthorized uses of fire.
- Be a good example! Always use fire sources — matches, lighters, candles, fireplaces, and campfires — in a safe manner. Never treat them as toys, or children may imitate you.
- Talk with children about what their friends or other children are doing with fire. What are they seeing online in video games, on TV, in movies, and on social media? Teach them specific ways to resist the peer pressure to misuse fire.
- Give praise for showing respect and age-appropriate responsible behavior toward fire.

Important!

Understand that children and fire are a **deadly combination**. If you suspect a child is unusually interested in fire or is setting fires, take immediate action. Follow these safety tips. Contact your local fire department, school, burn center, or counseling agency to get help from specially trained experts.

All children are at risk for using fire unsafely. Many fires happen simply because matches and lighters are left within a child's reach.

NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION
The leading information and knowledge resource on fire, electrical and related hazards

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