

CHILDREN, MATCHES & FIRE

A Deadly Combination

CHILDREN AND FIRE ...

Every year, hundreds of children die in home fires started by children who were using or playing with matches or lighters.

Many of the children who lit these fatal fires were merely being curious about fire; others used fire in anger or as a "cry for help". Some set fires deliberately as an act of vandalism. Any act of firesetting, regardless of the reason, is dangerous and must be handled appropriately. Children have a normal and healthy fascination with fire. If your children express curiosity about fire, or if you find they have been playing with matches or lighters, it's best to respond calmly, not punitively.

An excellent approach is to explain firmly to your child that matches and lighters are tools for adults to use carefully. Find safe ways to let your child participate in your careful use of fire. Let them blow out candles, for example, or put charcoal in the grill before you light it. As children grow more mature, they can learn how to use matches and lighters safely, but **only** under adult supervision.

KEEP MATCHES AND LIGHTERS AWAY FROM CHILDREN ...

Children as young as two years old have been reported to have started fires with matches and lighters. If you live with children, treat matches and lighters as you would treat a dangerous weapon: Store them up high, out of children's reach, preferably in a locked cabinet.

Teach very young that if they see matches or lighters they should **not touch** them, but to tell a grown-up about them and where they are. School-age children, on the other hand, should be taught to bring matches or lighters to an adult so the hazard can be removed from younger children.

DON'T LEAVE CHILDREN UNATTENDED ...

Unsupervised children can sometimes get their hands on matches and lighters that are well-hidden ... they may go "looking for them", or they may know where you hide them.

IF YOU SMOKE ...

Each year, careless smokers start roughly 35,000 home fires. Those fires cause more than 1,200 deaths and lead to hundreds of millions of dollars in property loss.

Check for Hidden Embers: Cigarettes can smolder under the cushions of a chair or sofa for several hours before igniting. That's long enough for the whole family to be asleep before the fire shows itself. Before leaving a room where people have been smoking, check in and around furniture for hot embers, ashes, butts, or matches.

Use Ashtrays: To reduce the risk of cigarettes starting a fire, have plenty of large, deep ashtrays on hand and empty them often. Fill them with water before dumping cigarette butts into wastebaskets. A lit cigarette left in an ashtray is a fire hazard. It can ignite butts and matchsticks, and, as it burns down, it can easily roll out of the ashtray and cause a fire.

Smokers Need Watchers: Never smoke in bed or when you are drowsy. Keep an eye on any smoker who is taking medication that might cause drowsiness. Especially watch anyone who is smoking and drinking.

JUST REMEMBER ...

Fires started by matches and lighters claim thousands of lives each year. Most of those deaths could be prevented by a few simple precautions ...

- Store matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Teach children that matches and lighters are **tools** for adults, not **toys**.
- If you suspect your child is setting fires, get help **immediately**. Your local Fire Department can put you in touch with experts trained to help.
- If you smoke, use great caution and check for smoldering cigarettes or embers before leaving a room.
- **NEVER** smoke in bed!

Fire Safety Education ... the Best Fire Prevention

Pamphlet courtesy of the Rolling Oaks Volunteer Fire Department
139 VZCR 3832 · Wills Point, TX 75169
903.560.1941