Prevent Fires
Due to Children Playing with
Lighters and Matches

Matches and Lighters are Tools...Not Toys!

Each year, children and youth start many fires. Between 2011 and 2015, there were 553 juvenile-set fires in Massachusetts that caused 1 civilian death, 33 civilian and 28 firefighter injuries and an estimated loss of $6.9 million dollars. Fifty-one percent (51%) of these fires were started by children using matches and lighters. The reasons children set fires varies; they may be curious about fire, crying for help, or engaging in delinquent behavior.

Never allow children to play with lighters or matches

Children as young as two years old have been able to operate lighters and start fires with them.

Matches and lighters in a child's hands can be as deadly as a loaded gun

Keep all matches and lighters out of the reach of children. Store in a high cabinet, preferably a locked one.

Do not leave young children unattended

It only takes a few seconds for a fire to start and quickly burn out of control. Other injuries can happen when children are left unsupervised. Children under 12 should not be left alone and should not be left in charge of younger children.

Teach young children to tell a grown-up when they see matches or lighters

Remind them not to pick them up. Praise children when they tell you they see matches and lighters. Tell them to ask adult to move them to a safe place, out of reach of youngsters.

Keep your home fire safe

Maintain your smoke detectors. Don't leave candles burning unattended. Plan a home fire escape route and hold a practice drill at least twice a year.

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FireFactors

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If you or a family member smokes

Be sure that matches and smoking materials are fully extinguished. Wet them under a faucet before disposing of them. Use a child resistant lighter. Since 1994 all lighters made or brought into this country must be child resistant. Do not disable this feature! Doing so makes the lighter a major fire risk.

Teach your children about safe uses of fire such as cooking heating, and birthday candles

Explain that fire is dangerous and only for grown-ups to use carefully. Set a good example by using matches, lighters, flammable liquids and fire safely. Tell children that you will teach them to use matches safely when they are old enough. When your child is old enough, teach them the correct way to light a match. Do this when you are using fire for a reason. For example, let your child light the birthday candles on someone else's birthday cake.

If your child is overly interested in fire, has started a fire, or has played with matches and lighters

Your child's natural curiosity about fire needs to be addressed. Children don't understand how dangerous fire is or how quickly it can grow and get out of control. All fires start out small and the potential for a deadly fire is very real.

If your child is overly interested in fire, has started a fire, or has played with matches and lighters, call your local fire department and ask if they have a juvenile firesetters intervention program.