

Tips For Caregivers of Juvenile Firesetters

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1. Install smoke detectors in the Child's bedroom, closet, hallways and common living areas. Do this immediately.
2. Teach children how to check to see if the smoke detector is working. This should become a regularly scheduled activity for you and your child.
3. Install 2A: 10BC fire extinguishers accessible on every level of the house, but especially near bedroom areas.
4. Remove all matches from the home. If matches are needed to start a gas stove, substitute a welder's flint, easily obtainable at a hardware store.
5. Deny availability of lighters to children. Smokers should keep any lighter on their person at all times and use only child resistant lighters.
6. Keep ashtrays cleaned out.
7. Keep household trash in metal containers with lids.
8. Lock up all flammable chemicals such as turpentine, gasoline, lighter fluid, or charcoal starter fluid for barbecues.
9. Remove closet doors to avoid a hiding place.
10. Increase supervision for firesetting children. Do not let them play alone or unsupervised in other children's homes where matches and lighters may be easily available.
11. Set firm rules that children are not to touch matches, lighters, the stove, barbeque lighters, flares, fireworks or any other object that could potentially start a fire.
12. Forbid children to touch or play with cigarette butts.
13. Instruct children to tell you immediately if they find matches or lighters. Firesetters should never be told to pick them up and give them to a parent or caregiver.
14. Forbid firesetting children to watch shows or videos with provocative fire themes.
15. Inform firesetting children that you will engage in randomly scheduled searches of their pockets, backpacks and room (between mattress and box spring and in the closet) to search for caches of matches and lighters.
16. Inform firesetters of these safety rules and decide on the consequences for breaking them. Discuss the rules and consequences with your child to check for understanding.
17. Give permission to all the children in the home to tell on someone who is engaging in fireplay.
18. Make and practice a fire escape plan with your family. Pick a safe family meeting place away from the house and the street.
19. Teach children fire safety behaviours such as Stop, Drop, and Roll; Crawl Low Under Smoke and how to dial 9-1-1.
20. Provide fire education, what fire is, how fast it spreads, appropriate and inappropriate uses. This instruction should be non-judgemental. Never threaten to punish a child with fire as a way to demonstrate the dangers of fire. Your local fire department can help you provide basic fire education to your family.
21. Acknowledge and reward the child who has abstained from fireplay or firesetting activity for a predetermined period of time. A monthly contract works well.