

Fire Setting

Myth: "Its normal for children to play with fire"

Fact: While curiosity about fire is common, fire play or setting is not. It can be deadly.

Myth: "It's a phase that he will grow out off"

Fact: It is not a phase and you must deal with it immediately or it will continue.

Myth: "If you burn his hand, he will stop"

Fact: If you burn your child, he will be scarred, that is all. You must address the real reason for the fire before the child will stop.

Myth: "If the fires are small it is no big deal"

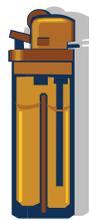
Fact: All fires start out as small fires. Anytime a child sets a fire, he is endangering himself and the people around him. That's a big deal.

Myth: "Fire setting is pyromania"

Fact: Pyromania is a disorder. Fire setting is not. It is a behavior which can have many reasons and which can be stopped.



**OUT OF
SIGHT,
OUT OF
REACH.**



What to do

If you discover burnt matches or papers, or have any other reasons to suspect that your child is setting fires, you should take immediate action. First of all, put all matches and lighters out of reach and explain to your child why you are doing this. Teach your child why you don't want him to play with matches or lighters. If the fire setting continues, or if the first incident caused any damage, your child should be evaluated to determine what is behind this type of behavior. Once this determination is made, the appropriate intervention can be used.

Where to go to for help:

Stephen A. Dossett

Fire Marshal

972-744-5750

972-744-4936 Nights * Weekends

972-744-5799 Fax



Street Address:
136 N Greenville Ave
Richardson, TX, 75081

Mailing Address:
PO Box 830309
Richardson, TX, 75083



136 N. Greenville Avenue
Richardson, TX 75081
972-744-5700

<http://www.cor.net/Fire>

Children & Fire...



**... What every
Parent should
know.**



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Strategies 1 & 2

Curiosity

- Child:** * Usually 3-7 years old.
* Almost always a boy, possibly hyperactive.
* Usually alone.
- Fire:** * Usually in a closet or under a bed.
* Hidden origin; matches or lighter with ordinary combustibles.
* Usually panics if fire gets out of control.
- Child & Fire:** * Child is curious and plays with fire to learn about it.

- Risks:** * Because the child doesn't understand the consequences of his actions, the fire can cause major damage.

Problem

- Child:** * Usually 7—12 years old
* Almost always a boy; history of school & social problems.
* almost always alone.
* Other aggressive & problem behaviors.
- Fire:** * Random ritualized usually in or around home.
- Child & Fire:** * Often no clear cut motivation for fire setting.
- Risks:** * Very high recidivism.
- Treatment:** * Counseling.



Introduction



“Children playing with matches” “Juvenile fire setting” “fire starting” phrases that describe a problem which has been receiving growing attention. And rightfully so. The United States Fire Administration reports that between 25 & 40% of all fire are set by children in some areas, this figure is as high as 70%.

Why do so many children—why does any child—light fires? More importantly, what can we do to stop them?

Most experts agree that the best way to understand a child's fire setting is by looking at the context and motivation for the behavior. There are four types of fire setting, and for each type, a different strategy is used to stop the behavior.



You can prevent most fire setting:

1. Teach very young children that fire is a tool we use to cook food or heat the home, it is not magic, but it is dangerous and only for adults to use carefully. (Use the example of driving a car or using power tools.)
2. Keep all matches and lighters out of the reach of very young children. Even a 2 year old can easily work a cigarette lighter.
3. Have all children bring matches to you and reward them or praise them when they do.
4. If an older child is curious about matches, show him the proper and safe way to use them. Explain why it is important to use matches only when needed and with an adult present.
5. Set a good example: always be careful with matches and fire. Keep your home fire safe and let your children help you.

Strategies 3 & 4

Crisis

- Child:** * Usually 5-10 years old.
* Almost always a boy.
* Change in life or recent trauma.
* Almost always alone.
- Fire:** * Highly symbolic fire.
* Someone's clothes or possessions, or specific location related to stress.
- Child & Fire:** * Child is using fire as a “cry for help” to show us his inability to cope with the sudden change.
- Risks:** * He will continue until stress is relieved or he is taught safer ways to cope.
- Treatment:** * Counseling and education.

Delinquent

- Child:** * Usually 10—14 years old
* Boys & Girls.
* Always in a group.
- Fire:** * Usually an outdoor location
* Dumpsters, grass fires, “vandalism” fires.
- Child & Fire:** * Child sets fires to impress peers, out of boredom, defiance, or peer pressure.
- Risks:** * Can cause harm to self & others.
- Treatment:** * Restitution & education.