



## More than a little problem!

The occurrence of juvenile set fires is both pervasive and an incredibly destructive event. Look at these disturbing statistics:

- Children “playing” with fire start 100,000 reported fires annually in the United States(\*)
- Yearly, fires set by youth cause an estimated 350 deaths and 3000 injuries.
- Fire protection costs and property loss attributed to youth set fires exceeds \$300 million annually.
- More than 50% of persons arrested for arson are under 18 years old.
- Almost 7% of youth arrested for arson are under the age of 10!
- More than 80% of children who set fires will be repeat offenders if left untreated.
- If united, a community or region can address the needs communicated by children and youth through their firesetting behavior.

\* United State Fire Administration data.

Effective intervention programming including fire safety education and counseling to prevent and mitigate the impact of juvenile firesetting is available to families and organizations.

## If:

- You know of a child involved in fire-setting...
- You want to offer your support to preventing juvenile firesetting...
- You want more information about juvenile firesetting...

## Contact

Office of the State Fire Commissioner

Lead Agent for the  
Pennsylvania Juvenile Firesetting  
Intervention Advisory Group

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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Timothy Solobay, State Fire Commissioner  
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## Pennsylvania

Juvenile Firesetting



# Pennsylvania Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program

General Public



## Programs to Prevent and Mitigate Juvenile Firesetting



## What types of children start fires?

All children have a potential to start fires. They may be motivated by curiosity, emotional, mental disturbances or peer pressure. Often children are curious about fire. They see their parents use matches and lighters daily and often children mimic adult actions. Television commonly portrays fire inaccurately, displaying fire as smoke free, exciting, and survivable. **That is absolutely not true.** Children often have unrealistic beliefs about fire, with a strong curiosity. Without any intervention a child's interest in fire may grow. A curious firesetter can cause much devastation by starting fires, often as much as children starting fires as acts of vandalism.

## What you can do.

Parents, teachers, law enforcement officers, social services providers, firefighters, medical personnel, mental health counselors as well as others must play an active roll in identifying children with fire play behavior. Adults must recognize that burned materials in and around the house, children with burns on their clothing or themselves, and children who display a high interest in fire may be engaging in firesetting activity. If a child displays these or other firesetting behaviors, don't delay in seeking help. Statistics show that juveniles who participate in firesetter intervention programs rarely repeat their fire-setting behavior but a majority of those who receive no help will light more fires.

## Pennsylvania's Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program

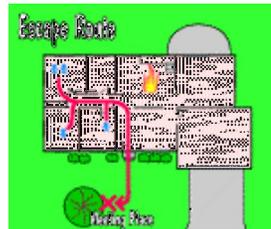
Throughout Pennsylvania there are juvenile firesetter intervention and mitigation programs that are successful in reducing the impact of juvenile-set fires. These programs involve several disciplines who have an interest in the welfare of juveniles. A child who engages in firesetting activity needs to be identified, screened to determine the level of fire activity, and referred to the proper treatment intervention. You can and should be involved.



## Fire Safety Tips for Parents and Caregivers

### Teach your children about fire.

- Fire is a tool, not a toy to be played with and only grown-ups should use fire.
- Big fires start as small ones and can grow and spread very quickly.
- Fire is dangerous and can kill if not properly used.
- Set a good example when using matches and lighters, and praise your children when they practice responsible behaviors.



9-1-1

### Practice Fire Safety in Your Home

- Plan and practice home fire escape drills with your family.
- Install smoke alarms in your home, test and maintain them regularly.
- Teach your children how to report an emergency to 9-1-1.
- Teach your children to tell you when they find unattended matches and lighters.

### Limit access to matches, lighters and other flame.

- Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children, locked in a cabinet if possible.
- Do not allow anyone to use matches and lighters in an unsafe manner in your home.



- Never leave open flames, kitchen stoves on or lit candles unattended. Never allow lit candles in children's rooms.



Supervise your children when they are in areas where open flames are present including the kitchen, living or family room with a fireplace, and around the barbecue grill.

**Please be fire safe!**