

Children and fire



Children playing with fire cause hundreds of deaths and injuries each year. Preschoolers and kindergartners are most likely to start these fires, typically by playing with matches and lighters, and are most likely to die in them.

See NFPA Safety Tips Below

Facts & figures

- In 2006, children playing with fire started an estimated 14,500 structure fires that were reported to U.S. fire departments, causing an estimated 130 civilian deaths, 810 civilian injuries and \$328 million in direct property damage.
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of all fatal victims of fires by playing are children 5 years old and younger.
- Nearly two out of every three child-playing fires -- and four out of five associated deaths and injuries -- involve matches or lighters.
- The items ignited by home fire-play are principally mattresses, bedding or clothing.

Safety tips

- Store matches and lighters out of children's reach and sight, up high, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Never use lighters or matches as a source of amusement for children; they may imitate you.
- If your child expresses curiosity about fire or has been playing with fire, calmly but firmly explain that matches and lighters are tools for adults only.
- Use only lighters designed with child-resistant features. Remember child-resistant does not mean child proof.
- Teach young children and school-age children to tell an adult if they see matches or lighters.
- Never leave matches or lighters in a bedroom or any place where children may go without supervision.
- **If you suspect your child is intentionally setting fires or unduly fascinated with fire, get help. Your local fire department, school, or community counseling agency can put you in touch with trained experts.**

Source: NFPA's "Children Playing with Fire" report by Jennifer D. Flynn, January 2009.

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