

Children and Fire

According to the National Fire Protection Association, children playing with fire cause hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries each year.

Preschoolers are most likely to start these fires by playing with matches and lighters, and are most likely to die in them. Children also start fires by playing with candles, fireworks, stoves and cigarettes.

Children who start fires may be children in crisis, with the fires acting as cries for help from stressful life experiences or abuse, according to studies of fire setting behavior.

Waterloo Fire Rescue recommends the following safety tips for parents and caregivers of young children:

- Store matches and lighters out of children's reach, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Never use matches or lighters as a source of amusement for your children.
- If your child is curious about fire or has been playing with fire, calmly but firmly explain that matches and lighters are tools for adults and are not to be touched by children.
- Teach young children to tell an adult if they see matches or lighters.
- Never leave matches and lighters in a bedroom or any place where children may go unsupervised.
- Only used lighters designed to be child-resistant and remember that child resistant does not mean child proof.
- Do not purchase novelty lighters that have features attractive to children including visual effects, flashing lights, musical sounds and toy-like designs. Many communities are becoming proactive by banning toy-like lighters locally, and are not waiting for national legislation to stop their importation.
- If you suspect that your child is intentionally setting fires or unduly fascinated with them, get help. Contact the fire department, your local school or a community counseling agency may be able to put you in touch with trained experts.

Source: National Fire Protection Agency

