

Waterloo Fire Rescue Fire PALS Injury Prevention Program

Matches and Lighters are Tools Not Toys

Grades Pre-K – 1

To educate the students that a match, like any other tool, can be used correctly or incorrectly. Also, discuss the importance of the “strike zone,” for storage of matches and lighters and the power and dangers associated with one match.

Learning Objectives:

At the completion of this unit, 100% of the students will be able to:

1. describe correct uses of matches or lighters
2. describe the “strike zone.”
3. identify the devastation possible from one match
4. define the dangers associated from playing with matches or lighters

Time Element

Knowledge/Attitude: 15 minutes

Activity/Skill: 10 minutes

Introduction/Content: 15 minutes

Children have a natural curiosity of fire. They see adults start the barbeque, light the candles on their birthday cake, and light candles during the holidays. Children are at high risk for burn injuries due to their own experimentation with matches and lighters. Since children cannot appreciate the application of matches as a tool, they will most often misuse them. Children need to understand that “Big Fires Start Small.” They need to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate use of matches and lighters. They also need to understand the risks and dangers associated with their use, and they need to know that the proper way to dispose of matches is to “Don’t touch, go tell an adult,” whenever they find matches or lighters. This lesson stresses that matches are for grown-ups only and that they should be locked in a cupboard away from children.

I. Tools vs. Toys Demonstration

- a. Show the children various household items. For example, for tools use: hammer, screw driver, wrench. For toys hold up Matchbox car, teddy bear, action figure.
- b. Ask the students to identify each item as either a tool or a toy and what the purpose is for each tool.
- c. Ask the question, “What is the difference between a tool and a toy?”

II. Matches and Lighters as Tools

- a. Show matches and lighter.
- b. Ask, “What do adults use matches or lighters for?”
“Are they used as tools?”
“When are matches or lighters not used as tools?”
“Are matches and lighters tools that children should ever use? Why not?”
(Stress that children should never use matches and lighters. Stress that it only takes one match or lighter to be a danger.)

III. “Strike Zone”

- a. Ask the children what they should do if they ever find matches.
 - Define the strike zone as a pretend line five feet off the ground or floor.
 - Any matches or lighters found below the “strike zone” should be immediately pointed out to an adult.
 - Children should not touch matches or lighters. If they see them they should tell an adult, who should then put the matches or lighter up away from children, preferably in a locked cabinet.

IV. Destruction from one match

- A. Explain to the children that fire is very hot, spreads quickly, and that the smoke from a fire can make it very dark. *Fire is deadly!* Explain how one match can burn down an entire house or building.
(Tell a story of a boy playing with matches)
- B. Explain how one match can start their clothes on fire.
- C. Explain how one match can burn them.

V. Journal

Have the students spend some time writing and drawing a picture of what they have learned in their journals.

VII. Summary

Reinforce with the students that matches and lighters are tools for grown-ups, not toys for children. Remind the students that it only takes one match to cause a tragedy to happen, that fires happen quickly and are deadly.

Home / School Connection

Have the students complete the letter home to their parents/guardians explaining the dangers of playing with matches or lighters.

Art/Science and Social Studies Connection:

“Don’t play with matches and lighters” activity sheet: *student handbook*

“Don’t get burned” activity sheet: *student handbook*

Suggested Activities

- a. Show different items accumulated from house fires detailing the destruction from fire.
- b. Use an 8X10 fire ground photo to pass around the class.
- c. Make a list of tools on the board and discuss their uses
- d. Ask the students what they should do if they see a younger child handling matches or a lighter.
- e. Ask the students what they should do if they see a parent leave a cigarette lighter on the table, below the “strike zone.”

Reinforcing Activity

Have the students identify matches or lighters below the “strike zone” during their safety house class.