

## COMMON QUESTIONS

### It is normal for my child to play with fire?

- While curiosity about fire is common the use of fire by children is very dangerous behavior. Children must be told and shown that matches and lighters are not toys.

### Is Firesetting a phase my child will grow out of?

- Interests come and go; however, misuse of fire causes injury and/or damage. Immediate steps must be taken to address the behavior and bring it to a stop!

### How can I deter my child from lighting fires?

Education for all involved is the key.

- Parent/caregivers need to learn how to limit child's access to ignition source.
- Parents/caregivers need to supervise children and be responsible for placing ignition items out of a child's reach.
- Children need to know how to make appropriate decisions regarding matches/lighters. Know the rules such as matches/lighters are a tool, not a toy, always tell an adult where they are, and to report the misuse of fire.

### Where do I take my child if I suspect they are using fire inappropriately?

- San Bernardino County Fire Department has trained Prevention Officers throughout the County that can provide intervention for your child.

## SET A GOOD EXAMPLE!

- Install and maintain smoke alarms and fire extinguishers.
- Plan and practice home fire escape drills.
- Regularly inspect your home for fire hazards.
- Always use "safety sense" when making or using fire.

## KNOW 2 WAYS OUT



**“Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you”**

Robert Fulgham

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# Juvenile Firesetters

## *Curious or Troubled*

*Education is the Key to Knowledge!*



**San Bernardino County  
Fire Department**  
Community Safety Division

## Juvenile Firesetting: The Whole Story

**J**uvenile arrests for firesetting hit an all-time high in 2007. In fact, arson has become the top teen and pre-teen crime in America. The National Fire Protection Association reports more than half of the 500,000 arson fires set in the United States each year are started by people 18 years old and younger.

Children set fires for many reasons. If a child plays with fire that does not mean they are a problem child. When children have repeated and intentional fire setting incidents, a serious problem exists. Through education, and in some cases counseling, children and their families can be given the skills to change this dangerous behavior. Studies show that fires started by children playing with matches and lighters are the leading cause of fire deaths for pre-school children.



## Types of Juvenile Firesetters:

### CURIOSITY FIRESETTERS

Usually are 2-7 year olds whose fascination with fire leads them to “play” with it to learn about it. They do not understand fire’s destructive potential. They need fire prevention education and supervision to channel their interests to safer activities.

### DELINQUENT FIRESETTER

The delinquent firesetter is responding to peer pressure and acting without thinking about the consequences of their actions. They need to take responsibility for their actions with fire prevention education and community service that is court mandated.

### CRISIS FIRESETTER

The crisis firesetter is sending a “cry for help” with their firesetting, because they are unable to cope with some trauma or stress. They need supportive fire prevention education and counseling to help them learn safer ways to cope with problems.

### PATHOLOGICAL FIRESETTER

The emotionally disturbed child uses the power of fire to compensate for feelings of helplessness. They need intensive treatment in a hospital or residential program.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO?

- Teach juveniles that matches are a tool, not a toy.
- Fire is dangerous and unpredictable. It is hot, fast, dark, and the smoke/gases will kill you first!
- Keep all matches/lighters out of the reach of juveniles—even infants can use a lighter.
- Never leave items cooking, burning, or left unattended.
- Teach juveniles to tell you when they see matches/lighters. Never allow them to pick them up and bring them to you or to light items around the house.



For more information on juvenile firesetters visit [www.sosfires.com](http://www.sosfires.com) or call (909) 386-8472