



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Arson Awareness Week – May 6 – 12 **Prevent Youth Firesetting**

San Bernardino – May 6-12 is National Arson Awareness Week. This year's focus is on the prevention of youth firesetting. The U.S. Fire Administration reported that between 2005 - 2009 fires started by children playing accounted for an average of 56,300 fires with associated losses of 110 civilian deaths, 880 civilian injuries and \$286 million in direct property damage per year. In 2010, according to the FBI, 40% of arson arrests were juveniles with 47.6% of those children under 16 years of age.

Parents should teach young children that fire is a tool, not a toy; keep matches and lighters out of reach, in high, ideally locked cabinets; and set a good example by safely using matches, lighters and other fire related devices. The most important thing a parent or caregiver can do is to always supervise young children.

Youth firesetting affects everyone through injuries and the loss of life, increased insurance premiums, decreased property values, increased crime and related expenses for fire and law enforcement professionals. Ultimately, the cost of battling youth firesetting is passed on to the citizens of San Bernardino County.

Here are a few tips on how you can help prevent youth firesetting:

- Lighters were the heat source in 50% of fires caused by children playing. Never leave matches or lighters within reach of children. Keep lighters and all other flame-producing devices locked up and out of sight.
- Do not purchase novelty lighters that look more like toys than a lighter.
- Praise your child for practicing responsible behavior and showing respect for fire. Set a good example; use matches, lighters, and fire carefully, as children will imitate positive behavior.
- Younger children are more likely to set fires in homes; often in closets, bedrooms and garages. ALWAYS know where your child is and provide good supervision.

Arson Investigators are asking for the communities help. If you or someone you know has a child who is prone to firesetting, please contact the San Bernardino County Fire Department at 909-386-8470 or your local fire department to have a Juvenile Firesetter Interventionist speak with the child.

More information on fire safety is available at www.sbcfire.org.

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