

## Children with Matches



Every year children start fires endangering lives and causing millions of dollars in property damage. Very often children starting these fires are under three years old. It doesn't have to be this way.

As parents, we want to do what is right for our children by teaching them about the dangers they face daily. Parents need to create a fire safe environment for their children. This means installing smoke detectors, developing a home fire escape plan, and keeping matches and lighters out of the sight and reach of young children. It is not surprising that children with parents who smoke, find matches and lighters more easily than in the homes of nonsmokers. In a child's hands, matches and lighters are as dangerous as a loaded handgun. Every parent has a duty to keep matches and lighters away from their children.

Fire is a part of a child's world . . .

Having an interest about the world is a natural and good trait for any child. Fire is a part of that world and a powerful force in it.

Leaving matches and lighters within easy sight and reach will increase the child's chance of playing with fire. When your child shows a curiosity about fire, take the time to teach your child that fire is a tool and not a toy. Some parents increase their child's natural interest by not teaching about the danger of fire. When you think your child is old enough, let your child help you light the birthday candles or the fireplace.

You would not let them pick up a loaded gun . . .

Children need to know that matches and lighters are very dangerous to touch! Teach your child that when they find matches or lighters to leave them alone and tell an adult at once. You would not ask a child to pick up a gun or a knife and bring it to you. Yet, all too often we ask children to bring us matches or lighters. Parents should secure matches and lighters just like they would a loaded gun.