

What You Should Know

Many wildfires around the home and community are started by children. Often young people will turn to lighting wildland fires (i.e. forests, brush, grass and swamps) in addition to things around their homes or other buildings... This information is intended to help you recognize when a child you know may need help.

Hundreds of wildfires are set by juveniles each year.

There are three main kinds of fire setting behaviours you may observe. The sooner a problem is identified the sooner the child can get help...

“Recognize a problem before it goes too far,”

Please remember how important it is to set proper examples whenever you are planning outdoor burning. Contact your nearest Natural Resource office for further information and safety tips regarding outdoor burning.

There are a lot of services that deal with juveniles with fire setting problems. For more information, and assistance, you can contact the US Fire Administration website at www.usfa.dhs.gov.

Michigan

www.mi arsonprevention.org

Wisconsin

www.wiaaai.com

Minnesota

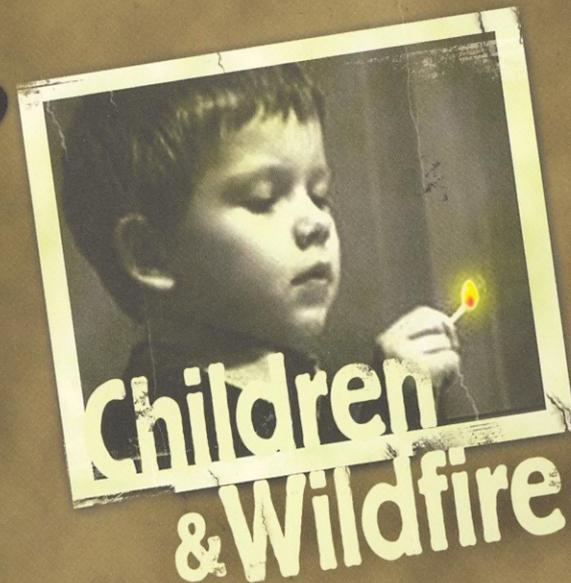
www.dps.state.mn.us/fmarshal/JFS/firejuven.html

Ontario

www.tapp-c.ca

Manitoba

www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/fire/





Recognizing types of FIRE SETTING behavior

Curiosity fire setting:

Most children under the age of 10 have a natural curiosity with fire. While it is normal, it's important to understand that it can also be dangerous.

- ✦ Often children seek out their ignition source. They may find a lighter or matches in the home which will spark their curiosity.
- ✦ Fires set by these children are usually small unplanned events in or near their home and the child will try to extinguish it.
- ✦ The fire is not directed toward destroying property or hurting anyone.
- ✦ Most often these types of fires go unreported.

Intervention:

- ✦ These types of fire setters usually respond well to education on the dangers of fire play by parents or caregivers.
- ✦ Make sure matches and lighters are kept out of reach.

Problem fire setting:

After the age of 10, continued fire setting may indicate a problem. (i.e. 3 or more fires within a five year period). In these cases:

- ✦ Most are planned events intended to do damage.
- ✦ The child will not try to extinguish the fire but will run away to avoid being caught.
- ✦ There may be a cache of ignition sources hidden in their bedroom or favorite play area.
- ✦ They usually have reason to set these fires and are trying to draw attention to themselves.

Intervention:

- ✦ These older youth or adolescents may not respond well to the same type of intervention used with the curiosity fire setter.
- ✦ The underlying factor's must be dealt with through professional counseling.

Proper identification of the type of fire setter is critical to successful intervention. It is very important to seek professional counseling.

Pathological fire setting:

These individuals have a history of fire setting and possibly other deviant behavior, and likely have underlying psychological or social problems.

- ✦ The behaviors are similar to the problem fire setter though likely result in more serious fires.
- ✦ Usually their fire setting is directed to do damage to property, or directed towards people that they have had disagreements with.
- ✦ As they become adolescents they may develop other social problems, such as substance abuse, problems coping in the home and school.

Intervention:

Pathological fire setters need professional counseling. These individuals may evolve to more serious crimes.

Intervention at an early age offers the best chance of success with this type of fire setter.