

Children and Fire



Children playing with matches or lighters is a leading cause of home fires and one in which the children and others present are often hurt. Children have a natural curiosity about fire and are tempted to play with matches or lighters left within their reach. In many cases, children who start fires have a history of fire setting. Hamilton Fire District #3 offers counseling programs for juveniles who set fires.

If your child is setting fires, you should contact Hamilton Fire District #3 for information about counseling before the situation gets out of hand and your child gets hurt. Nevertheless, the most important thing you can do is to keep all matches and lighters out of the sight and reach of children. Store them up high, preferably in a locked cabinet.

Even though they have a natural curiosity about fire, children may become frightened and confused in a fire and hide rather than escape to safety; especially if they started the fire. Children are often found hiding in closets or under beds where they feel safe. Therefore, it is crucial for your child's safety that you hold fire drills in the home at least twice a year to let them practice the right things to do in a fire emergency.

Clothing fires are a significant cause of fire injuries to children (and to adults too). They set their clothes on fire by getting too close to

heat sources such as open fires or stoves, or when playing with matches or lighters. Here too, the best defense is a respect for fire and training in what to do if their clothes do catch fire. Their natural reaction is to run ' which will make the situation worse. STOP, DROP, and ROLL is taught as the correct action and has saved many lives in clothing fires. The moment clothes start to burn, stop where you are, drop to the ground, cover your face with your hands and roll repeatedly to smother the flames.

Of course, young children should never be left alone in the home. Even if they don't play with fire, unattended children can accidentally start a fire by attempting to cook something or by using a heater or electrical appliance in the wrong way. All too often, tragic fires occur when young children are left unattended, for even short periods.

Children's Sleepwear

In the 1970's, the hazards of accidental ignition of sleepwear on young children were addressed through federal legislation. The Flammable Fabrics Act required that children's sleepwear (sizes 0-6X) be flame retardant. In a short time, this had a dramatic impact on deaths and injuries reducing them by 95%.

Recently, an increase in injuries has been reported among children sleeping in garments classified as "daywear" such as tee shirts and jerseys. These garments look just like sleepwear but are not fire retardant. The only way to tell the difference is by careful examination of the garment label. Therefore, parents should be careful to buy only fire retardant sleepwear for their children in order to enjoy the fire safety benefits of these garments