



Matches and lighters are available almost in every society — and for good reason.

Lighters and matches can be used to ignite candles, pilot lights, campfires, cigarettes, fireplace fires, and countless other presumably safe fires. Easy to buy, easy to transport and easy to use, matches and lighters are convenient and effective, but can also be deadly and destructive.

Each year in the U.S. there are nearly 150,000 match or lighter ignited fires. These fires kill more than 300 people, injure more than 1,800 people, and cause nearly \$500 million in property loss.

Where age was cited as a factor in a fire's ignition by lighters or matches, 37 percent of these fires were started by juveniles aged 10-17.



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Match & Lighter Safety



Tools or Toys?



WHAT CAN I DO?

Fires started by matches and lighters claim thousands of lives each year. Most of those deaths could be prevented by a few simple precautions.

The widespread availability of lighters and matches pose serious fire risks. The numbers of child-set fires involving lighters and matches confirms the need for adults to be more vigilant about concealing lighters and matches from children and teach children the dangers of fire play. Lighters or matches are the ignition source in more than 50 percent of all child-set fires where the heat source was known.

Children as young as two years old have started fires with matches and lighters. If you live with children, treat matches and lighters as you would treat a power tool or a dangerous weapon: store them out of children's reach, preferably in a locked cabinet.

Teach children at a very young age that if they see matches or lighters they should **not touch** them, but tell a grown-up where they are. School-age children should be taught to bring matches or lighters to an adult to keep them from younger children.

Match and lighter fires are two types of fires that ordinary citizens can prevent through caution, preparation and education. Fire safety education for children and adults and safe storage and use of matches and lighters may reduce the numbers of fires from lighters or matches as well as the overall incidence of such fires.

Children can easily identify and understand the dangers of some tools in the home. A match is also a tool. Teach them that using a match to light a barbecue, start a fire in the fireplace or ignite a pilot light are examples of proper ways to use a match.

Many novelty lighters are designed to look like toys, and the shape of BBQ lighters makes them easy for children to handle. Describe the dangers of these lighters to your child.

Fireplay, Firesetting and Juvenile Arson

Young people lack the experience to make safe decisions regarding fire. Adults must:

- **Set a good example** - Install and maintain smoke alarms and fire extinguishers per manufacturers directions, and always use fire in a safe manner.

- **Take responsibility for fire safety** - Point out to your children the fire safety rules you follow and discuss the dangers of fire.
- **Control access to fire** - Keep ignition devices out of reach and teach children to notify an adult if they find them.
- **Identify telltale signs** - Check in waste baskets, under the beds and in closets for burned matches or other evidence that your child is misusing fire. If you find evidence, react positively by using it as teaching opportunity.

One solution for this problem of match and lighter fires lies in connecting children and families to the agency that can help address firesetting behavior.

Juvenile Firesetter Helpline

1-800-500-8897

