

Florida Juvenile Fire Safety “Fire Safety Begins with ME” Program

FIRE SCIENCE CONCEPTS – “Breaking It Down”

Reasons for Firesetting: Group Discussion Topics and Examples

So, why do these youth set fires? Why do they find fire so fascinating? The answer to these questions can be found in the history and celebrations of fire, stages of child development and categories of youth firesetters:

- A child is celebrating his first birthday. There are balloons, presents, relatives and a birthday cake right in front of the child. His mother leans over and lights a match to a large candle in the shape of a number one. Everyone is smiling and singing “Happy Birthday” and then the child is told to blow the candle out.
- The family goes on a camping trip. During the day the family gathers plenty of firewood for the nightly campfire. At night the family builds a campfire so they can roast marshmallows, stay warm and tell stories by the glow of the fire.
- In science class different experiments show how different colored flames are created by burning different types of materials or how a combination of certain chemicals cause an explosion.
- It is the weekend and time for the weekly family barbecue. The charcoal or gas grill is heated in preparation for the cooking of the chicken, hamburgers, hot dogs and corn on the cob.
- It has been a stressful week at work and a mother prepares a relaxing bath with candles, bubbles and hot water.
- It is July 4th, and there are numerous firework celebrations throughout the community. This pyrotechnical extravaganza sets the sky on fire.
- In the winter- time a family uses a wood burning stove and a fireplace for warmth because they cannot afford electricity.
- A child sits down to watch his favorite television stunt show, the scene depicts a stuntman setting himself ablaze and then skateboarding over three parked cars. All of these scenes depict how our society uses fire for celebrations, warmth, cooking, relaxation and entertainment. However to a child who is growing, developing, and learning, these uses of fire may be misinterpreted as being safe when without supervision they can be very dangerous. A child may not understand the dangers of fire or may not have been taught fire safety. As children grow and develop they understand things in very simple ways. Concepts like danger, what is real and not real and their own invincibility are not easily understood. It is important to understand how children learn and develop when looking at the motivation behind a child’s firesetting.

Source: FEMA

