



Home fire safety fact sheet

J-FLIP - Juvenile Fire Lighters Intervention Program

The South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) is aware that when some children discover fire they develop an interest in unsafe fire play and experimentation. Most children have no real concept of the speed and power of a fire's growth cycle because they have never been taught about fire.

Our Juvenile Fire Lighters Intervention Program (J-FLIP) is designed to assist families to overcome the problem of children's unsafe fire play and experimentation. The aim of the program is to reduce the number of deaths, injuries and millions of dollars in property damage caused by unsafe fire play and fire setting.

In South Australia the program has been running for nearly 20 years. Most of the juveniles involved in the program are between 4 and 17 years of age and we achieve a very high success rate with the children we see.

What Is Involved?

The program is personalised to suit the age, maturity and history of each child. The practitioner, an experienced MFS firefighter, meets with the child and the parent or caregiver(s) over a number of weeks. A crucial aspect of the program is the development of a partnership between the child, the parent or caregiver(s) and the practitioner. Whilst the practitioner is the catalyst, the parent or caregiver(s) works with the child on an ongoing basis to modify behaviour successfully. Together the practitioner, child and parent or caregiver(s) develop a greater awareness of fire safety issues in the home and actively work towards a safer home environment.

Through the use of role-plays, discussions and enjoyable activities, the practitioner develops within the child a greater respect for fire and awareness of its consequences. Importantly, the benefits of fire are also explained to the child through concepts like "matches and lighters are tools not toys", "good fires, bad fires", "good decisions, poor decisions".

Children can only be referred to the program by parents or caregivers, or through the Youth Justice system as an outcome of a Family Conference. Other agencies (police, firefighters, teachers and schools, doctors, child care agencies, the Women's and Children's Hospital, family day care providers etc) are encouraged to contact the J-FLIP Coordinator if they have concerns about a child who is playing with fire, however the request to participate in the J-FLIP can only come from the child's parent or caregiver(s).

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Tips For Parents/Carers To Help Prevent Unsafe Fire Play And Experimentation

- Keep all matches and lighters out of reach and sight of children.
- Teach older children how to use matches and lighters safely and responsibly. Stress how important it is to use them only under adult supervision. One idea would be to supervise them while they safely light a backyard barbecue.
- Children copy what their parents do! Set a good example by only using matches, lighters and fire in a safe and responsible way yourselves.
- Teach your children about fire safety. For example, they should know how to use the 'Stop, Cover, Drop and Roll' technique if their clothes catch fire.
- Watch your children carefully for signs of fireplay eg matches or cigarette lighters in their pockets or school bags, burns on clothing, dead matches or partly burnt material in bedrooms or in the backyard, etc.
- Young children should be encouraged to notify an adult if they find matches or lighters and be rewarded or praised for doing so.
- Teach children not to play with friends who want to start fires, but to inform an adult.
- Provide your children with a torch for their bedroom and cubby house. Do not use candles or burners with children.
- Install smoke alarms in your children's bedrooms.

**There is no charge for J-FLIP
and the program is confidential**