

# Prevent Fires Due to Children Playing with Lighters and Matches

## Matches and Lighters are TOOLS...NOT TOYS!



- **Never allow children to play with lighters or matches.**  
*Children as young as two years old have been able to operate lighters and start fires with them.*
- **Matches and lighters in a child's hands can be just as deadly as a loaded gun!**  
*Keep all matches and lighters out of the reach of children. Store in a high cabinet, preferably a locked one.*
- **Do not leave young children unattended.**  
*It only takes a few seconds for a fire to start and quickly burn out of control. Other injuries can happen when children are left unsupervised. Children under 12 should not be left alone and should not be left in charge of younger children.*
- **Teach young children to tell a grown-up when they see matches or lighters.**  
*Remind them not to pick them up. Praise children when they tell you they see matches and lighters. Tell them to ask adult to move them to a safe place, out of reach of youngsters.*
- **Keep your home fire safe.**  
*Maintain your smoke detectors. Don't leave candles burning unattended. Plan a home fire escape route and hold a practice drill at least twice a year.*



## **FireFACTORS**

**Office of the State Fire Marshal  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

P.O. Box 1025 State Road • Stow, Massachusetts 01775 • (978) 567-3300 • [www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs)  
Public Education Hotline • 1-877-9 NO FIRE

- **If you or a family member smokes:**

*Be sure that matches and smoking materials are fully extinguished. Wet them under the faucet before disposing of them. Use a child resistant lighter. Since 1994 all lighters made or brought into this country must be of child resistant design. Do not disable this feature! Doing so makes the lighter a major fire risk by itself.*

- **Teach your children about safe uses of fire such as cooking heating, and birthday candles.**

*Explain that fire is dangerous and only for grown-ups to use carefully. Set a good example by using matches, lighters, flammable liquids and fire safely yourself. Tell them that when they are old enough, you will teach them about how to use matches safely. When you feel your child is old enough, teach them the correct way to light a match. Do this at a time when you are using fire for a reason. For example, let your child light the birthday candles on someone else's birthday cake.*

- **If your child seems overly interested in fire, has started a fire (it doesn't have to be a large one, all fires start out small) or has played with matches and lighters ... Call your local fire department and ask if they have a juvenile firesetters intervention program.**

*Your child's natural curiosity about fire needs to be addressed. Children don't understand how dangerous fire is or how quickly it can grow and get out of control. The potential for a deadly fire is very real.*

Each year, many fires are started by children ages 3-7 who are merely curious about fire. From 1993 through 2002, there were 8,500 juvenile-set fires reported in Massachusetts. Twenty-three (23) children, all ten years old or younger, died in fires caused by children playing with matches and lighters. These fires caused 425 civilian and 454 firefighter injuries. The estimated dollar loss for all of these fires was \$33 million.