



Coffee Break Training - Fire Prevention and Public Education

Firesetting by Children and Adolescents

No. FM-2011-4 June 23, 2011

Learning Objective: The student shall identify what information is available on youth firesetting in his or her community.

The danger of fire is greater than ever because of the high number of petroleum-based building materials. Fires burn quicker and hotter and smoke is more toxic than in the past because of these materials. In the hands of juveniles, fire can be deadly. Whether the child or adolescent was playing, experimenting, or purposely setting fires, firesetting is extremely costly. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that in 2008, children misusing fire started an estimated 53,500 fires reported to fire departments, causing an estimated 70 civilian deaths, 910 civilian injuries, and \$279 million in direct property loss. In addition to the dangers of firesetting, many parents are unaware that juveniles can be prosecuted for starting a fire once he or she reaches his or her State's age of accountability.

<p>Complete this section if the person involved in the ignition of the fire was a child or juvenile under the age of 18.</p>	<p>M2 Age or Date of Birth</p> <p>Age (in years) _____</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Month _____ Day _____ Year _____</p>	<p>M4 Race</p> <p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> White</p> <p>2 <input type="checkbox"/> Black, African American</p> <p>3 <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian, Alaska Native</p> <p>4 <input type="checkbox"/> Asian</p> <p>5 <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander</p> <p>0 <input type="checkbox"/> Other, multiracial</p> <p>U <input type="checkbox"/> Undetermined</p>	<p>M6 Family Type</p> <p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> Single parent</p> <p>2 <input type="checkbox"/> Foster parent(s)</p> <p>3 <input type="checkbox"/> Two-parent family</p> <p>4 <input type="checkbox"/> Extended family</p> <p>N <input type="checkbox"/> No family unit</p> <p>0 <input type="checkbox"/> Other family type</p> <p>U <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown</p>
	<p>M1 Subject Number</p> <p>Complete a separate Section M form for each juvenile.</p> <p>Subject Number _____</p>	<p>M3 Gender</p> <p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> Male 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Female</p>	<p>M5 Ethnicity</p> <p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino</p> <p>0 <input type="checkbox"/> Non Hispanic or Latino</p>
<p>M7 Motivation/Risk Factors Check only one of codes 1-3 and then all others (4-9) that apply.</p> <p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> Mild curiosity about fire</p> <p>2 <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate curiosity about fire</p> <p>3 <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme curiosity about fire</p> <p>4 <input type="checkbox"/> Diagnosed (or suspected) ADD/ADHD</p> <p>5 <input type="checkbox"/> History of trouble outside school</p> <p>6 <input type="checkbox"/> History of stealing or shoplifting</p> <p>7 <input type="checkbox"/> History of physically assaulting others</p> <p>8 <input type="checkbox"/> History of fireplay or firesetting</p> <p>9 <input type="checkbox"/> Transiency</p> <p>0 <input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <p>U <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown</p>		<p>M8 Disposition of Person Under 18</p> <p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> Handled within department</p> <p>2 <input type="checkbox"/> Released to parent/guardian</p> <p>3 <input type="checkbox"/> Referred to other authority</p> <p>4 <input type="checkbox"/> Referred to treatment/counseling program</p> <p>5 <input type="checkbox"/> Arrested, charged as adult</p> <p>6 <input type="checkbox"/> Referred to firesetter intervention program</p> <p>0 <input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <p>U <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown</p>	

The National Fire Incident Reporting System Arson Module collects information specific to juvenile firesetters.

Understanding the youth firesetting problem in your community is the first step in developing a youth firesetting prevention and intervention program. Collecting the available information on the youth firesetting problem in your community will demonstrate to the community the need for a firesetting intervention program and will answer the following questions:

1. Who is setting fires in your community?
2. What kinds of fires are being set by children and adolescents?
3. What costs, such as deaths, injuries, property damage, etc., are associated with these fires?

Knowing the extent of the problem will encourage individuals and agencies to support a program to meet the needs of the community. Demonstrating the need for a program based on current youth firesetting data from your community is the first step in identifying and justifying the need for a youth firesetting intervention program.

Remember, many fires set by youths never get reported to fire or police departments. The development of your firesetting intervention program might be the catalyst to get these fires reported.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). *Youth Firesetter Prevention and Intervention*, February 2011.