



Coffee Break Training - Fire Prevention and Public Education

Myths and Facts about Children and Fire

No. FM-2011-3 June 9, 2011

Learning Objective: The student shall be able to distinguish between myths and facts concerning children and fire.

The following are some commonly held myths about children and fire.

Myth: A child can control a small fire.

Fact: Most fires start small, but can become uncontrollable quickly.

Myth: It is normal for children to play with fire.

Fact: It is not normal for children to play with fire. Curiosity about fire is normal. Use of fire without an adult's knowledge, approval, or supervision is dangerous.

Myth: Firesetting is a phase children will outgrow.

Fact: Firesetting is not a phase. If a child is not taught fire safety, the firesetting can get out of control easily. It is a dangerous behavior.

Myth: If you burn a child's hand, he/she will stop setting fires.

Fact: Purposely burning a child's hand is child abuse and is against the law. The reason behind the firesetting must be discovered and addressed.

Myth: If you take a child to the burn unit to see burn survivors, he/she will stop misusing fire.

Fact: Going to the burn unit only instills fear, and does not teach a child anything about fire safety. More importantly, we need to be sensitive toward burn survivors who are trying to recover emotionally and physically from their burns.

It is important to understand myths concerning children and fire. Children need to be educated about fire and have their motives understood so that proper interventions can be used to stop the firesetting behavior.

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



It is important to understand myths concerning children and fire.

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