

Children Playing With Fire

- Between 2007 and 2011, an average of 49,300 fires in which **fire involving play** was a contributing factor were reported to U.S. municipal fire departments per year.
- Fires resulting from play caused annual averages of 80 civilian deaths, 860 civilian injuries, and \$235 million in property damage.
- Structure fires accounted for 23% of fires, but 98% of civilian deaths, 93% of civilian injuries, and 91% of property damage.
- Children were responsible for the vast majority of these incidents.
- Outside or unclassified fires accounted for 76% of the fires, and vehicle fires for 2%.
- Most loss of life and damage occur in structure fires, and specifically home fires.
- Half of home playing structure fires (52%) were started by cigarette lighters, 18% by matches, and 5% by candles.
- Bedrooms were the area of origin for 39% of fires, and mattress or bedding was the item first ignited in 23% of home playing structure fires.
- Forty-three percent of home structure fires involving play were started by a child under the age of 6, compared to 5% of outside or unclassified fires started by children in this age group, while 39% of outside or unclassified fires (39%) involved children in the 10 to 12 age group.

These estimates are based on data from the U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA's) National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA's) annual fire department experience survey.

Child Fire Safety Tips

- Store matches and lighters out of children's reach and sight, up high; preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Never use lighters or matches as a source of amusement for children; they may imitate you.
- If your child expresses curiosity about fire or has been playing with fire, calmly but firmly explain that matches and lighters are tools for adults only.
- Use only lighters designed with child-resistant features. Remember child-resistant does not mean child proof.
- Teach young children and school-age children to tell an adult if they see matches or lighters.
- Never leave matches or lighters in a bedroom or any place where children may go without supervision.
- If you suspect your child is intentionally setting fires or unduly fascinated with fire, get help. Your local fire department, school, or community counseling agency can put you in touch with trained experts.