

Youth Fire Stop Program Helps Educate Children and Parents

Juvenile arson arrests exceeded adult arson arrests for the first time in history. The number of fires set by children is growing. In the time it takes you to read this, a child may have changed his/her life and the life of his/her family with the strike of a match.

- ❖ Fire and burn injuries are among the most frequent causes of death of children under five years of age.
- ❖ Children lighting fires in Manitoba, cause property damage in the millions of dollars annually.
- ❖ Burn injuries are extremely painful, leave deep lifetime scars, and have a devastating effect on children.

The goals of the Youth Fire Stop Program are to:

- ❖ Stop curiosity fire setters from injuring themselves and others;
- ❖ Reduce property damage caused by children playing with fire; and
- ❖ Prevent the child fire setter from becoming an adult fire setter.

The program relies on referrals from concerned parents/guardians, human resource agencies, police, fire crews, and school boards, etc. First, we interview the child and the parents or guardians, to assess the level of concern with regard to the fire setting behaviour. Next, we may involve the child in a series of educational visits, or we may refer the child to a community human resource agency.

Any child can be a potential fire setter. Curiosity about fire is often the issue, or a crisis in a child's life may have led to fire setting as a way of expressing feelings. Fire setting is a symptom of another problem.

As a parent, you can teach your child about fire:

- ❖ Matches and lighters are tools not toys.
- ❖ Never hide from fire, crawl low in smoke.
- ❖ Clothes on fire? Stop, drop and roll.
- ❖ Plan and practice home fire escape drills.

Please call us for help:

- ❖ If your child has played with fire on more than one occasion. (Unsupervised)
- ❖ If your child has deliberately set a fire.
- ❖ If you suspect, or find evidence that your child is setting fires.

To ask about the Youth Fire Stop Program, contact the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service at 986-6320. Through this program, we dedicate ourselves to preventing child-set fires. Our Public Education Officer will work with you and your child to help ensure that your home is a safe environment.