

## **MATCH & LIGHTER SAFETY**

Each year, hundreds of children die in home fires started by children who were using matches or lighters. Many of the children who started these fires were merely curious about fire; others were using fire in anger or as a cry for help. Some children set fires deliberately as an act of vandalism. Any act of fire-setting, regardless of motivation, is dangerous and must be handled properly.

Children have a natural curiosity about fire. But never use matches or lighters as a source of amusement for a child. They imitate what you do. If your children express curiosity about fire, or if you find they have been playing with matches or lighters, respond calmly, not punitively. Explain firmly to your child that matches and lighters are tools for adults to use carefully. Find safe ways for your child to participate in your use of fire. Let them blow out candles, for example, or put charcoal in the grill before you light it. As children get older, they can learn how to use matches and lighters safely, but only under adult supervision.

### **Keep Matches and Lighters Away From Children**

Children as young as two have started fires with matches and lighters. If you live with children, treat matches and lighters as you would treat a dangerous weapon: store them up high, out of children's reach and sight, preferably in a locked cabinet.

Use only lighter designed with child-resistant features. These lighters are difficult for most young children to operate. But don't take chances. Store these lighters out of children's reach as well.

Teach very young children to tell an adult if they see matches or lighters. School-age children should be taught to bring matches or lighter to an adult, removing them immediately from the reach of younger siblings.

### **Don't Leave Children Unattended**

Unsupervised children can sometimes get their hands on matches and lighters, even if they are well hidden. More than half of all fatal fires started by children involved bedding, mattresses, or upholstered furniture. Never leave matches or lighters in a bedroom or any place where children may go without supervision.

### **If You Smoke**

Each year, careless smokers start more than 25,000 home fires. Those fires typically cause more than a thousand deaths and hundreds of millions of dollars in property loss.

#### **Check for Hidden Embers**

Cigarettes can smolder under furniture cushions for several hours before igniting.

Before leaving a room where people have been smoking, check in and around the furniture for hot embers, ashes, butts, or matches.

#### **Use Ashtrays**

To reduce the risk of cigarettes starting a fire, have plenty of large, deep, non-tip ashtrays on hand, and empty them often. Fill ashtrays with water before dumping their contents into wastebaskets.

A lit cigarette left in an ashtray is a fire hazard. It can ignite butts and matchsticks and, as it burns down, it can easily roll out of the ashtray and cause a fire.

#### **Smokers Need Watchers**

Never smoke in bed or when you are drowsy. Keep an eye on any smoker who is taking medication that might cause drowsiness. Especially watch anyone who is smoking and drinking.

Fires started by matches and lighters claim hundreds of lives each year. Taking a few simple precautions could prevent most of those deaths.

- Store matches and lighters out of children's sight and reach.

- Teach children that matches and lighters are tools for adults, not toys.
- If you suspect your child is setting fires, get help immediately. Your local fire department, school, or community counselor can put you in touch with experts trained to help.
- If you smoke, check for smoldering cigarettes or embers before leaving a room.