

Madison Township Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau

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JUVENILE FIRESETTER PROGRAM

The Madison Township Fire Department has established a program that is designed to deal with a growing trend of Juvenile Firesetting and Fireplay. This program is under the jurisdiction of the Fire Prevention Bureau. The Fire Department has several trained Juvenile Firesetter Counselors assigned to this program.

Juvenile Firesetters come into contact with the Fire Department through a variety of ways including:

- ◆ Concerned Parents
- ◆ School Officials
- ◆ Social Workers
- ◆ Police Departments
- ◆ Firefighters
- ◆ Other Fire Departments

There appears to be four separate and distinct types of Juvenile Firesetter that the Fire Department has been involved with since the inception of this program several years ago:

1. Curious Firesetter

- ◆ The majority of these children are between 2 and 7 years of age
- ◆ They imitate adults that light candles, cigarettes, etc.
- ◆ It is normal for them to have a curiosity with matches or fire in general
- ◆ They can be taught proper use of fire and how destructive a force fire can be.

2. Troubled Firesetter

- ◆ The majority of these children are between 2 years of age to teens.
- ◆ Generally a child that is crying out for help
- ◆ Plays alone a majority of the time, limited interaction with peer group
- ◆ Inability to form close relationships
- ◆ Impulsive fighting with siblings or peers
- ◆ Extreme mood swings
- ◆ Bedwetting
- ◆ Stuttering
- ◆ Hyperactivity

- ◆ Overly aggressive behavior
- ◆ Shyness
- ◆ Some of these children express anger by hurting themselves or destroying their own toys
- ◆ A large percentage of these children have problems at school
- ◆ This may be a response to abuse or neglect
- ◆ Setting fires is a way to act out their anger

3. Delinquent Firesetter

- ◆ Usually teens with a history of suspicious fires
- ◆ Usually an act of vandalism for pure enjoyment of destroying property
- ◆ Targets for these types of fires include abandoned buildings, open fields, or schools
- ◆ Fires can be large, premeditated, and sophisticated
- ◆ These teens usually have a history of lying, stealing, truancy, and possible substance abuse

4. Severely Disturbed Firesetter

- ◆ Very small percentage of firesetters
- ◆ All ages are presented, and all have history of behavioral problems
- ◆ Most of the severely disturbed firesetters are in mental or correctional institutions
- ◆ Treatment for these children is complicated and lengthy, with no easy solutions.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The program begins with a meeting with the juvenile, parents, and the Juvenile Firesetter Counselor, who has been trained to counsel children from the ages of 4 through 17. This meeting generally takes place at the Fire Station, after the parents have been advised of the parameters involved in the program. The juvenile receives counseling tailored to individual needs regarding Fire Safety and the dangers associated with firesetting and fireplay activities.

We invite you to call or stop in at either Fire Station if you have any questions about our services, and **THANK YOU** for supporting Madison Township Fire and EMS Services.