

A Workbook for Kids About Fire



Version for older children

Provided by
Washington State Patrol, Fire Protection Bureau
Office of the State Fire Marshal

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This book belongs to:

My Fire Department is:

INTRODUCTION

This handbook will give you information that will save your life. Just as important, this information will help save the lives of the people you care about.

Every time you misuse fire, there is a chance that someone could get hurt or die.

It might seem like everyone is getting on your case about the fires. Remember that people care about you and they don't want to see you get in trouble or get hurt. That's why you have been talking to the Fire Department about fires and that's why we are having you read this book.

You are going to learn about what real fires are like, and how fire tools are to be used. You are also going to learn what your legal responsibilities about fires are, how to make good choices and how to make sure your home is safe.

Be sure and read all of the chapters and complete any homework assignments that were given to you. Thank you for taking this seriously—you and your family's lives depend on it.



ACTIVITIES

Each section of this book has activities to complete. Make sure you complete all the activities assigned to you by the fire department.

WHAT IS REAL FIRE LIKE?

Where do we get our ideas about fire?

If we haven't had a fire in our home, where do we get our ideas of what it would be like? Almost everyone gets their image of fire from movies or TV shows. But movie fires are nothing like real fires.

Pretend you're a movie producer. Would you fill the whole room full of thick, black smoke so no one can see the star of your movie? Probably not. So movie fires don't have much smoke. It's light and bright, and you can easily see what's going on. Would you want your movie to be over in 15 minutes? Of course not. So movie fires are slow and dramatic. In the movie *Backdraft*, they had time to have a fistfight in the middle of the fire!

Fire Facts

Real fire is very hot. Real fires can reach more than 1000 degrees in just five minutes. That's five times as hot as water when it boils!

What is real fire like?

Real fire is dark. In a real fire there is a whole lot of smoke, and it's black, not white. Blindfold yourself and try to find your way out of your home. That's how hard it is to see in a real fire. That's why you need an escape plan that you've practiced, and a smoke detector to warn you quickly.

Real fire is very hot. Real fires can reach more than 1000 degrees in just five minutes. That's five times as hot as water when it boils. A fire's heat is even more dangerous than the flames. The air gets so hot it can burn your lungs and not let you breathe...so hot your clothing melts to your skin.

Real fire has poisonous smoke and gases that can kill you. Fire uses up the oxygen you need. The smoke and gases are the most dangerous part of a fire. If there's smoke in the room, you must get down under it where the air is cleaner and cooler. Three out of four people who die in a fire are killed by smoke, not flames. If you breathe even a small amount of the smoke and gases, you could pass out and die in just a few minutes.



How Fast is Real Fire?

In just 30 seconds a small flame can get out of control. In just five minutes—or the amount of time in most commercial breaks on TV—your whole house can be on fire. There's no time to try to figure out how to get away, especially when you are scared or surprised—you have to be ready!

There's no time to look around for things to take with you. Just get out.

Real fires can also be hard to put out—much harder than it looks in the movies. You are able to blow out the fire on candles because that is how they are designed, but when fire isn't on a candle or other tool designed to hold fire, it can get very big very fast. Even a fire the same size as a candle flame can get bigger when you blow on it. Firefighters have trouble putting out fire sometimes, even with all their special equipment.

FIRE TOOLS & THEIR USE

Tools are things that people use all of the time to help make jobs easier. Some tools are very dangerous if not used in the right way. Matches and lighters are tools that were made to help us start fires. Firestarting tools are very dangerous and must be used correctly.

Rules for Firestarting Tools

Because matches and lighters are very dangerous fire tools, there are rules about using them. We understand that nobody likes being told what to do, but we also know that if someone breaks these rules, people could be hurt seriously or even die from a fire.



Tool Rules

These rules are easy to follow and they are very important. We are counting on you to be a good role model and help us make everyone safe from fire.

1. Matches and lighters are to be used correctly and only with adult permission and supervision.
2. Help keep firestarting tools out of reach of younger kids. If you find a firestarting tool, go tell an adult what you've found or take the fire tools to them. Remind adults to keep firestarting tools put safely away.
3. Try to stop other kids from misusing fire. Teach them about how dangerous fires are. If they don't stop, then go tell an adult.



Question:

What are you supposed to do if you find firestarting tools?

Consequences of Misusing Fire

Two really bad things can happen when people misuse fire.

Injuries and Death

The first bad thing is burn injuries and deaths. Nobody wants it to happen, but sometimes people who misuse fire cause themselves and others to be injured or die.

Property Destruction

The second bad thing that happens when people misuse fire is that they destroy things. Sometimes it is a house, or a forest, or something that is very important to you or someone else.

Legal Consequences

Because of the bad things that can happen when people misuse fire, kids under the age of 18 can be legally charged for being involved with fire (See the chapter *Your Legal Responsibilities When It Comes to Fire*). Charges can include arson, malicious mischief, reckless burning, or reckless endangerment. If you set a fire and are found guilty by the courts, you may have to go to jail. Being charged with a crime also begins a criminal record that could affect what kind of a job you can get when you're an adult.

Question:

If someone misuses firestarting tools, what can happen?



ACTIVITIES

Safe Place Checklist

Due date _____

Make a list of all of the places in your house where there are firestarting tools. Put a check mark next to the ones that you think should be put in a safer place. Show the list to an adult in your home and ask them to help you move the firestarting tools you checked.

Match History

Due date _____

Did you know that matches were invented in 1830? That's over 170 years ago! Write down why people invented matches and then list three good uses of firestarting tools.

Newspaper Math

Due date _____

Count how many fires are reported in the newspaper for one week. Add up the dollar loss reported for those fires.

Figure Out Why

Due date _____

Try to figure out why you were misusing fire tools and see if it matches one of the reasons below.

Understanding Firesetting

By reading this book, you're learning why it is important not to misuse fire tools. Have you ever wondered why other kids misuse fire tools? Here are some reasons or motives for why children do it.

Curiosity/experimentation

Most kids tell us that they used the matches and lighters so they could see what would happen. They are curious about what things look like when they burn or how different things smell when they burn. The bad news is that lots of people have been hurt when kids have used fire tools.

Reactionary

Some kids tell us that they make fires on purpose when they are angry, upset or trying to make people pay attention to them. Most of the kids didn't want a big fire to happen or anyone to get hurt, but sometimes it does happen.

Delinquent Behavior

Sometimes kids make fires because they think it is funny or cool to ruin other people's stuff. Maybe friends dared them, or maybe they did something else bad like stealing or vandalism and then set a fire as well.



LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

What could happen legally if you set a fire? Kids would probably think twice before starting a fire if they understood what could happen to them. Here are the answers to some of the questions kids usually ask.



What is arson?

It is called “arson” when someone **maliciously** and **knowingly**, or **recklessly**, starts a fire or explosion. People set fires for many reasons—as a prank or dare, to cover up another crime, just for the fun of it, to experiment, to see something burn, to hurt somebody, or to destroy something. It really doesn’t matter how big the fire is or how much damage it causes; it is still arson.

What’s the big deal about arson?

Arson is the second leading cause of death in fires in the United States, topped only by fires caused by smoking. One in every four fires (25%) is caused by arson. Fire and Police Departments are concerned because arson is a big problem in our country, and kids under 18 start over half of all arson fires.

Can kids get in trouble with the law for setting a fire?

At age 12 or older, kids can get in legal trouble for committing a crime, such as arson. They can be arrested, have their rights read to them, be handcuffed, and put in the back of a police car. In some cases, they can even be taken to a place like a jail called a juvenile detention facility.

Even younger kids, ages 8 to 12, can get in trouble for setting a fire if they know what they did was wrong.

What are the legal consequences for someone who sets a fire?

If someone sets a fire they can be charged with a crime such as arson. The kid and their parents will have to go to court. The judge will decide what will happen.

What if the person didn’t mean to do it?

They can still get in trouble for starting the fire even if they didn’t mean to cause damage or hurt anyone. **Society** and the legal system are concerned with the “**potential**” for people to be put in danger. This includes people in the building and the firefighters who would come to put out the fire.

What if someone was killed in the fire?

In addition to the crime of arson, the court could charge the kid with murder or a similar crime.



*Laws may be different in your area.

What is the possible punishment if someone sets a fire?

Community supervision

You have to report to a **probation** officer.

Community Service

You have to give back to the community by doing unpaid work such as picking up garbage, weeding, or cleaning bathrooms.

Restitution

You have to pay the victim back for the damaged property. You may also have to pay the fire department for their cost to put out the fire.

Detention/commitment

You can be held for a certain amount of time in one of the State's juvenile detention or rehabilitation facilities (jail). The judge will decide how long you have to stay there.

Other

The court may require you to have a **curfew**, attend counseling, and attend special programs. The penalties if someone were killed would be much more serious.



What if I didn't start the fire?

You can still get in trouble even if you are just watching, and never start a fire yourself. You could be considered an **accomplice**. You can be treated the same way as the person who actually set the fire. Remember, you have choices. You can leave. Then you can tell an adult you trust. That might save someone's property and even their life, including the person setting the fire.

What happens to other people when someone sets a fire?

The people who are hurt the most are the **victims**. If a home or building is burned down, they need to find another place to live or work. They may not have the money to replace or fix it. Imagine if this happened to your home or the recreation center you like to go to after school. Worse yet, what if someone were hurt or killed?

How can this affect my future?

Being **convicted** of a crime hurts both you and your family. You may have to pay restitution for damage, which can be a lot of money. Having a crime on your record can affect your chance to get a job in the future. You can also lose your freedom until you can gain back the trust of your parents, the court, and the community.



ACTIVITIES

What Does It Mean?

Due date _____

What do these words mean? Look each word up in the dictionary. On a separate piece of paper, write down the definition next to the word. Then write a sentence for each word that gives an example of how the word is used. Be sure to use your own words when you write the sentences.

Maliciously

Knowingly

Recklessly

Consequences

Society

Potential

Victims

Probation

Restitution

Curfew

Convicted

Accomplice

WHY KIDS SET FIRES

Kids set fires for many reasons. Some kids misuse fire because they are bored, angry, or curious. They don't understand what can really happen. Some kids light fires when they are by themselves and feeling hurt and alone. Then there are kids who misuse fire to try and impress their friends, or they go along with a bad idea just to "fit in." Have you ever done something you knew wasn't right, but did it anyway because your friends were doing it?

Fire Fact

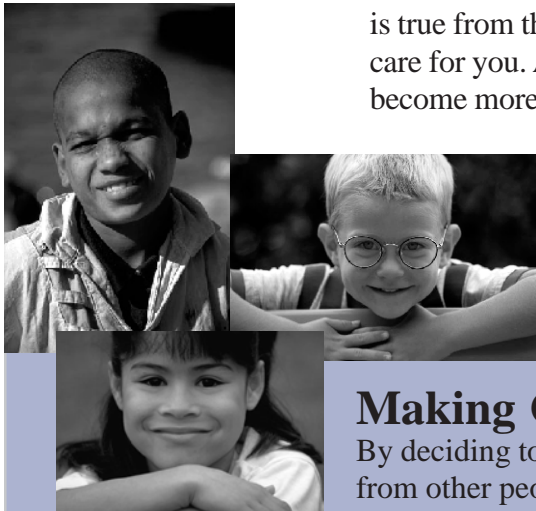
Kids have different reasons for setting fires. It is important for you to understand what your reason was.

Have you ever used the line "but everyone else has one"?

Do you remember the last time you wanted your parents to buy you something? Did they give you that look that said "NO" even before the words came out of their mouths? You probably tried to change their mind by making them believe everyone else at your school has one. This is just your way of telling them you want to fit in.

Why is fitting in so important, anyway?

We all have the need to belong to other people or groups of people. This is true from the time you are very young and you need your parents to care for you. As you grow older you begin to take care of yourself, become more independent, and make more choices on your own. Some kids think that if they want to belong to a group they need to do and act just the way the group does.



Making Good Choices

By deciding to make good choices in your life, you can earn respect from other people. You can also have more freedom and privileges. Here are some ideas to help you make good choices.

1. **Get all the information.** You can't make a good decision without all the facts.
2. **Understand what will happen,** both good and bad. When you are considering your decision, be sure to think about which choice will be good for you now and in the future. Also, what could the consequences be and are you prepared to face them?
3. **Ask for help if you need it.** Identify a grown-up you trust and ask for their advice before you decide.
4. **If you've made the wrong choice, don't be afraid to admit it.** This will give you the opportunity to turn it around. Learn from your mistakes; it will help you avoid repeating them in the future.

What if your friends are doing something you know is wrong?

It is important to remember that friends don't own you. So even if you want to belong, you are still able to make your own decisions and accept responsibility for them. You can choose your actions. You know by now that "everyone else is doing it" isn't an excuse for making a choice that hurts you or someone else.



Who should decide what is right for you?

It is up to you to make the choices that are good for you. It is never easy to say "no" to a friend, but when going along with an idea goes against who you are and what you believe, you really have no choice. Remember, a real friend will respect your beliefs and decisions. Choose your friends carefully and always make choices that YOU can live with.



ACTIVITIES

Real Responsibility

Due date _____

"Responsibility" is one of those words, like "truth" and "character," that has so much meaning it can be hard to explain with just words. However, that's a good place to start. Look up the definition for these words and write it in the space below.

Responsible

Responsibility

Now read the situations below. On a separate piece of paper, write down a "responsible" ending for each one.

1 David is home alone after school. He has some chores to do and also needs to work on his homework. He goes to his older brother's room to borrow his microscope for his science project. In his brother's closet he finds a box with some fireworks left over from the 4th of July. He knows that there are matches kept in the cupboard above the refrigerator.

2 Justin is with his friends from the basketball team. He is the newest member of the team and sometimes the other guys tease him about not being tough enough to play with them. They get an idea to set the wastepaper basket in the second floor boys' bathroom on fire. They think the alarms will go off and everyone will get out of school early. They want Justin to start the fire.

3 Sandy is bored. She starts to play with a portable video game and the batteries run out in it, making the game impossible to play. She goes to the kitchen drawer where new batteries are usually kept and sees that there are no 9-volt batteries left. She looks around some more and then remembers that the smoke detector in the hall uses that size battery.

And You?

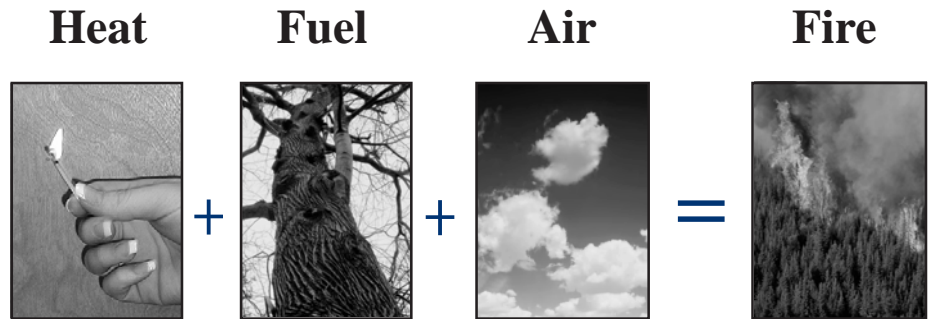
Think about the fire situation you were involved in. Now consider what "responsible" choices you could have made that would have changed the negative outcome to a more positive one. Rewrite the ending of your fire situation.

A SAFE HOME

Fire is something natural that existed long before people began to use it. If it is treated with respect and care, fire heats our homes, cooks our food, and runs our cars. Used improperly, it has tremendous destructive force.

So What Causes Fire?

All fires require fuel (something to burn), oxygen (air), and heat. If one of these ingredients is removed, the fire can be put out. If one of these ingredients is not there, the fire can be prevented.



How Do You Put A Fire Out?

Take away the fuel, and the fire will go out. **Take away the heat**, and the fire will go out. **Take away the air**, and the fire will go out.

In the following situations, which ingredient is being taken away to stop the fire from burning? Write your answer in the box.

1

2

3

Will You Know When There's A Fire?

Most fatal fires happen at night, while people are asleep. Many people think that the smell of smoke will wake them up. That's not true. The poisonous gases can quickly put you into an even deeper sleep. Your family should have a smoke detector in your home. Do you have a smoke detector in your bedroom? If not, ask an adult in your home to install one. Here are some other tips you should know about smoke detectors:



- ◆ A “chirp” sound means that your battery needs to be replaced. If you hear that sound, let an adult know.
- ◆ Batteries should be replaced at least once a year.
- ◆ Check your smoke detectors every month by pushing the test button.

Will Your Family Know What To Do?

Every month you practice your school fire escape plan. That's great for when you're in school. What about when you are home? Help your family make a home fire escape plan. Here's what you need to do:

- ◆ Draw a floor plan of your home.
- ◆ Mark two ways out of every room-especially bedrooms.
- ◆ Agree on a meeting place outside your home. Everyone should go to the meeting place immediately after escaping a fire.
- ◆ Make sure everyone knows that once you are out of the home you never go back inside for any reason.
- ◆ Find out where the nearest telephone is that can be used to call 911 for help.
- ◆ Practice, practice, practice.



ACTIVITIES

Ask an Expert

Due date _____

Interview someone from the fire department or someone who has experienced a fire. Find out everything you can about how destructive fire can be. Ask how fire has affected the people who lost their home and belongings. Videotape or tape record your interview. Make sure to have a list of questions ready to ask prior to the interview.

Safety Survey

Due date _____

Do a survey to find out how many people in your class or neighborhood have a working smoke detector in their home. If someone you interview does not have one, explain to them why it is important to have a smoke detector.

Check It Out

Due date _____

Work with your family to identify and remove fire and burn hazards. Many homes contain flammable materials (things that will burn, such as gasoline, kerosene, or lighter fluid). Be sure your family is using and storing these hazardous materials properly. Use the *Home Safety Checklist* on the next page to make sure your home is fire safe.

HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

Keep your home safe. Use the following checklist to find out if your family is doing everything they can to stay safe at home. Share this information with your family.

YES NO

- Smoke detectors are located on every level of our home and inside each bedroom.
- Our smoke detectors were tested this month.
- Old papers, oily rags, magazines and other clutter are removed from the basement, hallway and garage.
- Flammable liquids are stored in approved containers.
- Things that can burn are kept three feet from all heat sources.
- Our house numbers are visible from the street.
- Matches and lighters are kept out of the reach of children in a secure place.
- Small appliances, like the toaster, are unplugged when not in use.
- Cooking is never left unattended.
- Electrical outlets are used properly by not overloading them.
- Our family fire escape plan has been practiced.
- Windows used for escaping can be opened easily.
- We have a working flashlight to use if the power goes out.
- 911 stickers are on or near all our telephones.
- There is a working fire extinguisher on hand and family members know how to use it.

Discuss what you found with your family. Write down any things that need to be fixed or anything that needs to be done to help your family stay safe at home.

**Provided by
The Office of the State Fire Marshal
Washington State Patrol
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