

Prevent Juvenile Arson

- In the state of Minnesota a child as young as 10-years-old who plays with fire and damages property may be charged with arson.
- Juvenile arson accounts for more than 50% of the total arson arrests in Minnesota.
- Statistics show that of the children killed in fires, more than 50% of those children started the fires themselves.

If you know a child at risk:
call the Youth Firesetting
Helpline

1-800-500-8897



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For School Staff



Understand and Prevent Youth Firesetting



Youth Firesetting Helpline

1-800-500-8897



Schools Can Help

Any student who brings to school ignition devices, such as matches, lighters or fuel such as gasoline needs help. By calling the toll-free help line, school staff can initiate the intervention process for a student. The help line is monitored daily.

The child's family contact information will be forwarded to the local youth-firesetting intervention specialist so the child and family can receive life-saving information and education. There are several programs available in Minnesota designed to change the behavior of youth at risk.

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Youth Firesetting

Children are naturally curious about fire. When this curiosity becomes experimental it is dangerous ~ even deadly ~ not only to the child and those in the area, but also to fire-fighters and emergency personnel who respond to the scene.

In Minnesota, juveniles as young as 10-years-old can be charged with criminal arson. Research shows that by the time a child is caught playing with fire there have been ten previous fire starting events. (Dr. Dian Williams, [Understanding the Arsonist: From Assessment to Confession](#)) Early intervention curbs this behavior. Children possessing matches or lighters, or gasoline, are showing a strong interest in fire, and firesetting will naturally follow.

Juvenile Arson

Juvenile arson is grossly underreported. Families may not know that confidential help is

available. The goal is not to give the child a "record" or send him/her to "Juvie" but to implement appropriate intervention strategies.

The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension reports an upward trend in juvenile arson arrests over the last 5 years. In 2010 there were 100 kids charged with criminal arson across the State as compared to 65 in 2007. These are kids over the age of 10; many more incidents involved younger children. The US Fire Administration reports that children younger than 10 start 75% of the youth set fires.

Let's find these kids before they get in trouble! Keep an eye out for any child who smells like gasoline. In 2012 more than one child brought gasoline to school with the intention of starting a fire. They were caught only by the smell of gasoline on their hands, and later found on surveillance video lighting a fire in the bathroom.

Also, watch for kids in possession of lighters, and call the help line.

The Minnesota State Fire Marshal's Office sponsors the youth firesetting helpline for anyone involved with children at risk of firesetting behavior ~ parents, teachers, school staff, social services, law enforcement & others.

