



FireWatch of Camden County

Camden County Fire Marshal's Office

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WHAT IS CHILD AND ADOLESCENT FIRESETTING?

Each year, in the United States thousands of deadly fires are started by children. Most of these fires could be prevented if parents were better informed about the hazards of leaving cigarette lighters and matches within the reach of young children. Some of these fires are started intentionally by adolescents. Perhaps even sadder than the death and destruction caused by children setting fires, is the fact that most of these tragedies could be prevented through a program that includes; fire safety education, awareness and counseling regarding children and fire.

No single group is more familiar with the problem of child and adolescent fire setting than our nation's firefighters. They witness the ugly results of deadly fires every day. They know how most fires can be prevented. That is why the Fire-Service has taken bold steps, by establishing programs like FireWatch to prevent juvenile fire setting, and help keep our children and their families safe.

WHY DO CHILDREN SET FIRES?

Children are naturally curious about fire. Indeed, most children are fascinated by it. This natural curiosity is the cause of most fires set by young children. Usually they find a lighter or matches and, through imitation, experimentation or just plain carelessness a fire results.

Some children may set fires intentionally. Many experts believe that this group of youngsters set fires because they are experiencing some sort of emotional strain, such as a divorce, impending move or maybe a death in the family. More often than not, these children intentionally set fires more than once. No matter what the circumstances that cause these children to use fire, the results can be tragic.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

FireWatch is an independent consortium composed of firefighters, law enforcement personnel, educators, mental health professionals and concerned citizens who are eager to help extinguish the problem of youthful fire setting. FireWatch is a fire and burn prevention program operating out of the Camden County Fire Marshal's Office.

The FireWatch program coordinates such interventions as fire safety awareness, burn prevention education, family counseling as well as anger management I conflict resolution and parenting skills. FireWatch also serves as an advocate for responsible fire prevention legislation and regulations in New Jersey and throughout the country.

Because of programs like FireWatch there is help available to child fire setters and their families. Children can be taught constructively about the proper uses and the inherent dangers of fire. Parents can be trained to teach their children at an early age basic fire safety techniques. And, through FireWatch's special companion program, children who intentionally set fires can get individual attention from a caring and understanding firefighter.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the United States, Juveniles account for 55% of all arson arrest. We at FireWatch feel this is a preventable crime. A study in Camden County 1979-1984 revealed that 22% of all fire fatalities were the direct result of juveniles misusing fire.

WHAT INTERVENTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

Thanks in part to grants and funding from the Camden County Youth Services Commission, as well as the Camden County Firemen's Association. FireWatch offers a vast variety of interventions designed to reduce a child's risk of continued fire setting behaviors.

Interventions include:

- Fire Safety Education
- False Public Alarm and Bomb Safety Education
- Family Counseling
- Group Counseling
- Anger Management & Conflict Resolution
- Parenting Skills Support Workshops
- Firefighter Companion Program
- Smoke Detector Program

Depending on the assessed needs of the child and family, one or more of the above mentioned interventions may be recommended. All children who enter FireWatch will receive Fire Safety Education. All information collected at FireWatch is confidential.

