



Dear School Principals and Teachers:

The Juvenile Firesetter Handbook has been updated by the Upper Pine River Fire Protection District. It was designed to increase awareness of the juvenile firesetting problem in our community and to help principals, teachers, counselors, psychologists and SRO's understand the importance of referring students to this important program.

Our city continues to experience many fire incidents originated by children and youth under the age of eighteen that result in fires of varying magnitudes. These incidents range from curiosity fire play, to those involved in crisis situations, to purposeful delinquent behavior. It's rare, but the potential also exists for pathological cases.

This program provides an opportunity for the child's level of firesetting/fire play to be evaluated through an educational and awareness session with the child and their parents. That session is then followed up with a three hour group class led by a Juvenile Firesetting Intervention Specialist, a firefighter and possibly an adult burn survivor. Since the program's inception, we have had an extremely high success rate in reducing the number of children involved in repeat fire incidents. In some instances, referrals are made for the child to receive additional help through resources at San Juan Board of Cooperative Services. (BOCS)

Referral forms can be found in the back of the handbook along with details on how to submit it to the Upper Pine River Fire Protection District.

If you have any questions or if we can provide additional information, please call 970-884-9508 and ask to speak to a Juvenile Firesetting Intervention Specialist.

Sincerely,

The Upper Pine River Fire Protection District

Upper Pine River Fire Protection District Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program

Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program

Division of the Fire Marshal

515 Sower DR

Bayfield, Colorado 81122

Phone 970-884-9508

The 2003 International Fire Code, Chapter 4 Section 401.3 states – In the event that an unwanted fire occurs on a property (school), the owner or occupant shall immediately report such condition to the fire department. Building employees and tenants shall implement the appropriate emergency plans and procedures. No person shall, by verbal or written directive, require any delay in the reporting of a fire to the fire department.

This means, that by law, all fires, ignitions or explosions shall be reported; even when the fire was put out by a school employee, or student.

**Upper Pine River
Fire Protection
District**



Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Handbook

**For
School
Personnel**



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The Facts

Nationwide there are fires that have been set in schools. These fires can result in a significant amount of property damage/loss to our communities. Statistically, for every reported child set fire, ten other child set fires occur that are never reported. Nationally, 85% of all children killed in fires die as a result of a fire they started. With these sobering statistics, it is easy to see the need for prevention and intervention with children and firesetting and fireplay.

Fire, Kids and Firesetting

Fire- It fascinates and terrifies us. It is critical to our existence. But, uncontrolled, it can cause death, injuries and property destruction.

The unsupervised, experimental, mischievous or illegal use of fire by children in the United States has become a major threat to personal safety and property. In Colorado numerous juveniles have been arrested for arson. Bayfield, Colorado is no exception and the number of childhood fires due to firesetting by children is alarming.



Warning Signs

The following is a list of "red flags" or indicators that a child may have a serious firesetting problem. If a child has set more than one fire, or has had more than one incident of fireplay, and one or more of the following, you are encouraged to seek professional help.

- Recent changes in behavior
- Attention deficits, temper tantrums, mood swings, impulsive behavior or excessive anger
- Problems at school such as discipline, learning problems or unexplained absences
- Other troublesome behaviors such as stealing or lying
- Drug or alcohol use
- Deliberate efforts to collect fire materials
- Failed to get help to extinguish a fire
- Shows extreme curiosity about fire
- Recent losses due to death, health, divorce, loss of friendships, moves, etc.
- History of being abused or neglected
- Sad, withdrawn appearance
- Poor self esteem
- Family stresses
- Daydreams about fire
- Boasts about fire sets
- Behaviors indicating they are a loner, a risk taker or a fighter
- Fire set out of anger or in response to a family problem

Categories of Firesetters

Juveniles can be described according to their risk for future involvement in unsupervised firestarting and intentional firesetting. Key psychological and social factors describe the profiles of at-risk youth.

Curiosity

Firesetting occurs in kids who have a natural curiosity about fire, coupled with limited knowledge of the dangers of fire and an opportunity to obtain matches, lighters and accelerants.

Crisis

Acting out of an emotional state, anxious or worried, fires intentionally set, attention seeking control seeking, or a cry for help.

Delinquent

Impulsive and irresponsible, school problems, or problems with home life, show offs, bad reputation, argumentative or angry, uncooperative, little or no remorse, doesn't recognize serious consequences.

Pathological

Very serious and dangerous, "Pyromaniacs", arousal, fascination with fire, magical aspects of fire, hospitalization may be necessary.



ADD/ADHD and Firesetting

Attention Deficit or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders are a common denominator with many juvenile firesetters. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, ADD/ADHD affects 3-5% of all children in the United States. The National Institute of Mental Health has identified the following three characteristics of ADD/ADHD:

1. **Inattention:** Children may have difficulty focusing on one task for any length of time. They live in the moment and often forget directions or rules given a short time ago. Playing with matches, lighters or candles may result in the child walking away from burning or smoldering objects they have just ignited.

2. **Impulsivity:** Children act quickly without thinking of the possible consequences of their behavior. They tend to act immediately when encountering interesting objects such as matches or lighters. The sense of adventure and excitement is very high in these children and contributes to the high risk of burn injury.

3. **Hyperactivity:** These children may exhibit a high activity or energy level. The high energy level coupled with a strong curiosity can lead to fire experimentation especially when parental supervision is lacking.

A diagnosis of ADD/ADHD requires a trained clinician with expertise in childhood disorders to thoroughly test and evaluate the child. The clinician, parent and teacher should develop intervention and treatment plans to afford this child an opportunity for success. Monitoring and reevaluation should be on a continuous basis. Children rely on parents and caregivers for nurturing, security, acceptance and stability. When conflicts, distress, substance abuse, instability or death occur in the home, children become unsettled, scared, angry, depressed or sad and attempt to resolve the issues in their own mind without having learned appropriate coping or problem solving skills. One way children attempt to cope and express their emotions is by setting a fire. A child's firesetting can place a family and neighborhood in extreme danger.



School Fires and Mandatory Reporting

The 2003 International Fire Code, Chapter 4 Section 401.3 states – In the event that an unwanted fire occurs on a property (school), the owner or occupant shall immediately report such condition to the fire department. Building employees and tenants shall implement the appropriate emergency plans and procedures. No person shall, by verbal or written directive, require any delay in the reporting of a fire to the fire department.

This means, that by law, all fires, ignitions or explosions shall be reported; even when the fire was put out by a school employee, or student.

School fires include these potential scenarios:



Using matches and lighters, a heated light bulb or magnifying glass to ignite combustibles in the school bathroom, hallways, locker-room, classroom or playground.



Lighting firecrackers, smoke bombs or other types of fireworks on school property.



Igniting paper or other products in a trashcan, dumpster or near a school campus.



Using chemicals to cause a fire in a science classroom or on other school property.



Making, possessing, and/or activating any kind of bomb-like device on or near a school campus.



Setting bushes, trees, brush or grass on fire on or near a school campus.

The Crime of Arson

The law in the state of Colorado is very specific as it relates to fireworks, reckless burning, and arson, regardless of where the offense occurs. One thought to consider is that a child can be arrested in Colorado at the age of ten for setting a fire even if he/she did not mean for the fire to damage anything or get out of control. Colorado has four “degrees” of arson, a statute dealing with woods and prairies, and a municipal code for illegal fireworks. Children ten years of age or older can be arrested for any one of these statutes.

Arson in the First Degree – 18 - 4 - 102:

This crime involves the burning of a building or occupied structure. First degree arson is proved by showing beyond a reasonable doubt that the offender knowingly set fire to, burned, or caused to be burned any building or occupied structure of another without owner’s consent. First degree arson is a class 3 felony.

Arson in the Second Degree – 18 - 4 - 103:

This crime involves the burning of any “property” (other than a building or occupied structure) of another. Second degree arson is proved by showing beyond a reasonable doubt that the offender knowingly set fire to, burned, or caused to be burned any property (not a building or occupied structure) of another without that person’s consent. Second degree arson is a class 4 felony if the damage is \$100.00 or more, or a class 2 misdemeanor if the damage is less than \$100.00.

Arson in the Third Degree – 18 – 4 - 104:

This crime involves the burning of property with the intent to defraud. Third degree arson is proved by showing beyond a reasonable doubt that the offender by means of fire or explosives intentionally damaged any property with the intent to defraud. Third degree arson is a class 4 felony.

Arson in the Fourth Degree – 18 - 4 - 105:

This crime involves the reckless starting of a fire or causing an explosion. The penalty depends upon whether the act endangers persons or property. Fourth degree arson is proved by showing beyond a reasonable doubt that the offender knowingly or recklessly starts or maintains a fire or causes an explosion on his own property or that of another and places another person in danger of death or serious bodily injury, or any building or occupied structure of another in danger of damage. Fourth degree arson is a class 4 felony if a person is endangered, a class 2 misdemeanor if only

property worth more than \$100.00 is endangered, or a class 3 misdemeanor if only property worth less than \$100.00 is endangered.

Firing Woods and Prairie – 18 – 13 – 108:

On property of another the offender knowingly and without lawful authority or with criminal other than their own. Spreading to property of another the offender knowingly or with criminal negligence set a fire/caused a fire to be set, and permitted that fire to pass from their own grounds to the injury of any other person. Firing Woods and Prairie is a class 2 misdemeanor.



What to do if a Child Brings Matches or Lighters to School or Sets a Fire at School

Follow state laws and school policies and procedures: The 2003 International Fire Code, Chapter 4 Section 401.3 states – In the event that an unwanted fire occurs on a property (school), the owner or occupant shall immediately report such condition to the fire department.

- Do not just chalk it up to kids being kids, this child may be sending a message that he/she needs help.
- As part of your school discipline policy, incorporate mandatory attendance in UPRFPD's juvenile firesetter intervention program
- Notify the counselor or social worker of the firesetting incident and have him/her work with the student to find out why they set the fire.
- After the fire or incident, call 979-884-9508 (even if the fire was small and was school personnel). This child is in need of assistance.
- Notify the child's parent or guardian of the incident, and make a referral to the Upper Pine River Fire Protection's Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program at 970-884-9508.

How to Make a Referral

Step I: Immediately call 9-1-1 to report the fire.

Step II: Contact the child's parent/guardian and have them respond to the school to meet with school administrators, and in some cases a fire investigator. If your school has an SRO, they should be contacted too.

Step III: Contact the Upper Pine River Fire Protection District (970-884-9508) immediately after the fire incident. Have the child's biographical information available including their name, parent/guardian name, address and telephone number, child's age and date of birth. Please be able to provide information on the fire including the type of ignition source, location of fire, amount of damage, and if there were any injuries.

See Pg. 7 for the Juvenile Firesetter Referral Form. Please feel free to copy it and fax the completed form to: 970-884-2444 - Attention: JFS Program.



Upper Pine River Fire Protection District Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program Incident Referral

Referral date: _____

Referring Person's Name: Phone: _____

Agency: UPRFPD _____ Court _____ Parent _____ Outside FD - _____

Other: _____

Youth Information

Name: _____ Age: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian Information

Name: _____ Relation: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Description of Incident:

Firefighter/Officer Name: _____

Station# _____ Shift _____



For Office Use Only

Assessment date: _____ JFS Class Date: _____

Additional Youth Info:

DOB: _____ Sex: Male: _____ Female: _____ ADD/ADHD? _____

Juvenile supervised Y / N Matches _____ Lighter _____ Accelerants _____

Access to Lighter/Matches Y / N

Where did juvenile obtain items? _____

FD response Y / N Station # _____

Inside house/Structure Y / N

Backyard/porch/deck Y / N

Away from house/structures Y / N WUI/grass fire _____ Park _____ Street _____
Other _____

Injuries Y / N

Deaths Y / N

Town of Bayfield Y / N County: _____

Court Ordered Y / N \$50.00 fee _____

UPRFPD Investigator Y / N Name: _____

Other(s) involved in incident Y / N

Name(s) and phone number(s): _____
