



Hot Issues

a publication of the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal's Youth Fire Prevention & Intervention Program

Educating the media about children and fire: a great example from McMinnville, Oregon, Fire Department

Fire service interventionists and public information officers in Oregon have been working with the local print and electronic news media to change the terminology for reporting on fire incidents involving youth. Any wording that normalizes firesetting behavior is being discouraged. Headlines that describe "children playing with a lighter" or "a youth playing with gasoline" are being replaced with more accurate phrases such as "child using or a child misusing a lighter caused a fire that resulted in" In addition, every fire incident involving a child is an opportunity for the fire service to send a safety message to parents. A simple message of encouraging parents to test smoke alarms or practice a home fire drill is easy to include in every press release.

An excellent example of good messaging was recently distributed in a press release from Deputy Fire Marshal Deborah McDermott at McMinnville Fire. In responding to an apartment fire, DFM McDermott wrote the following press release: "McMinnville firefighters were dispatched at 6:20 pm last night to a report of a structure fire at 1500 NE 27th #22, Town Center Apartments. When crews arrived, they found heavy black smoke coming from a downstairs apartment.

Crews were able to make entry and contain the

fire to the bedroom where the fire started. The rest of the apartment sustained heavy smoke and heat damage. The three occupants — one adult and two children, and several pets, were able to escape without injury. Tenants from the other units in the building were able to return to their apartments later in the evening. Damage to the building and contents is estimated to be \$40,000. The occupants of the apartment did not have renters insurance. Five pieces of fire equipment and twenty-five firefighters responded from McMinnville Fire Department; no mutual aid was received.

The fire was caused by two young children using lighters to ignite toilet paper on their bed. This tragedy is a reminder that you must always keep matches and lighters in a place where young children have no access. The Red Cross has been contacted to offer assistance to the family."

In addition to stating the fact that the children were using a lighter, Deborah also used the press release to educate parents about limiting access to matches and lighters for young children.

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Case study of a success

By Timothy Kopet, Ph.D.

The Fire Safe Children and Families Program began with a USFA Assistance to Firefighter Grant in 2006. The program provides fire safety and social skill development to children and youths in an area covering three urban counties in Oregon. A Fire Safety Academy provides classes for children ages six to eleven years and their parents or caregivers. SAFETY Class, a multi-session

This collaboration works because we have good working relationships with providers and an advisory board comprised of directors and chiefs from the respective agencies.

series for youths ages twelve to seventeen, is court-mandated and holds youths accountable for fire offenses. An alliance of fire service, mental health and juvenile justice programs is key to providing the services. This collaboration works because we have good working relationships with providers and an advisory board comprised of directors and chiefs from the respective agencies. What follows is a case study of one boy who graduated successfully from the program.

Jacob is a ten-year-old boy who set a fire outside his home, causing a grass fire. A neighbor called the fire department, which succeeded in extinguishing the fire before extensive damage or injury occurred. The fire investigator quickly learned that Jacob and a friend had been using a lighter to light different objects on fire. Jacob and his friend were cited for reckless burning and referred to the juvenile court. The fire investigator was unaware that this was the second time that Jacob had been misusing fire.

Jacob was referred to the local fire department and he and his father were interviewed using the Oregon *Juveniles with Fire* screening tool. The results of the interviews indicated the need for referral to the Fire Safe Children and Family Program.

The juvenile court counselor set up a formal accountability agreement — Jacob and his father would successfully complete the Fire Safe Children and Family Program by attending the six-session Fire Safety Academy and would abide by all other rules in the agreement. The agreement also included a contract signed by Jacob indicating he would have no contact with fire and his father's agreement that Jacob would be closely supervised.

Jacob's parents do not live together and he lives part of the week with his father and part of the

Juvenile Firesetter Database Project

The International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Burn Foundation has been working on a project to develop, through a national summit, the framework for a standardized, comprehensive national data collection and evaluation system in order to create a national juvenile fire setter database. This two-day invitational meeting will include key representatives from stakeholder

groups as well as other agencies identified by the focus group.

On December 8th and 9th in Washington, DC, IAFF hosted a focus group of national experts in the field of juvenile firesetting. They were brought together to guide the development of the customized scientific data set that will be used as the basis for discussion at a national summit on data quality and metrics.

week with his mother, so she also needed to agree to abide by the contract too.

Jacob and his father attended all six sessions of the Fire Safety Academy for youth ages six to twelve and their caregivers. During these sessions, Jacob learned about fire safety and fire science, and also about expressing feelings, anger management and problem solving. These were crucial in helping Jacob learn better skills and decision making.

His father learned about fire safety and science too, but he had a chance to gain a better understanding of how to improve the relationship between Jacob and himself, get ideas on parenting, and learn the legal responsibilities for parents and young people in regard to laws about misuse of fire, fireworks, and explosives.

While Jacob was eager to learn the material in the program, he appeared sad to group facilitators. He was upset about his parents breaking up, even after a year of separation. This disclosure prompted his parents to work on family issues and discuss Jacob's needs. At last check, Jacob was less depressed and doing better in school. There have been no new fire incidents.

The Fire Safe Children and Families Program has many stories such as the one about Jacob. While the parents and families are sometimes unhappy about having to attend the Fire Safety Academy

(ages six to twelve) or the Safety Program (ages thirteen to eighteen), they quickly learn that this free program offers a lot to their families.

In addition to the groups, we have set up rapid access funds to provide for assessment and short term therapy with mental health professionals familiar with working with youths misusing fire. These services have also expedited referral of youths who need more intensive intervention, such as residential treatment, as well as providing a bridge for youths who don't have adequate health insurance and need therapeutic support to avoid out-of-home placement because of their mental health and fire intervention needs.

If you are interested in learning more about the program, please email firesafechildrenfamilies@gmail.com

About the author: Dr. Kopet is the grant administrator of the Fire Safe Children and Families Program and chairs the program's fifteen-member advisory board. Dr. Kopet will be presenting lessons from the academy classes at the Northeast Juvenile Firesetting conference in May, 2012 (see page 8).

The final step in this project is to disseminate the findings of the summit to fire departments and other agencies throughout the United States via written reports, industry conferences, industry journals, and partner websites.

The IAFF Burn Foundation is hoping the summit proceedings will generate further interest and involvement in developing a national database

that could serve as a resource for local and regional juvenile firesetting programs.

Funding for this project was provided through DHS/FEMA's Assistance To Firefighters, Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program.

For more information, contact Phil Tammaro at 3rddistrictburnfoundation@iaff.org

Novelty (toylike) lighter laws revisited

Toylike lighters re-appear on some shelves in Oregon

The law making novelty lighters illegal in Oregon will be three years old in March of this year. Oregon became the third state in the nation to prohibit novelty/toylike lighters. The intent was to keep lighters that look like toys or something other than a lighter out of the hands of children. This included lighters with flashing lights, or audible effects.

After the bill passed, the Office of State Fire Marshal created educational material for retailers. Along with these materials, the OSFM developed an advisory committee to write administrative rules; assembled a lighter review committee to review any questionable or disputed lighters; and updated the website with a photo gallery of acceptable and prohibited lighters. The OSFM also worked with fire departments when they found retailers with novelty lighters for sale.

Fire departments and OSFM officials reported retailers were generally cooperative in removing prohibited lighters from store shelves.

From the inception of the program through 2010, the OSFM collected 1,828 lighters from various retailers.

In May 2011, complaints about retailers selling novelty lighters began to rise — four retail chain stores, two “mom and pop” stores, a liquor store, and an online merchandiser — were found with banned lighters.

While 100 percent voluntary compliance is the ultimate goal, it is rarely attainable. Therefore additional tools or incentives must be used. To confront the re-appearance of novelty lighters in Oregon, the OSFM will be providing ongoing educational materials to retailers and will contact distributors and retailers reminding them about Oregon’s novelty lighter law. The law also allows

the OSFM to issue civil penalties if necessary: \$1,000 to distributors, and \$500 to retailers.

We can’t stop our educational and compliance efforts. If we do, we should expect to see the continued re-emergence of novelty lighters as we are now.

The OSFM requests any fire official encountering novelty lighters during inspections to please contact the OSFM at 503-934-8285.

And in Illinois

Officials found illegal lighters in four Chicago stores in May. In response to reports that some Chicago stores were selling illegal novelty lighters the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal visited thirty businesses and found four in violation of state law.

In Illinois, violators can be fined up to \$500. According to the fire marshal’s office, no businesses were fined, but they were informed about the law and asked to remove the illegal lighters. Follow-up inspections were conducted.



The fire marshal sent a reminder letter to fire departments and other organizations to remind them of the novelty lighter ban. Local law enforcement, the Liquor Control Commission, and the Department of Revenue will look for the lighters during their own inspections.

The office's website also now includes a link to a complaint form about novelty lighters.

http://www.sfm.illinois.gov/documents/novelty_Lighters_Complaint_Form_for_Web.pdf

Meanwhile, in Indiana

Indiana is very close to becoming the sixteenth State to pass legislation to ban or limit the sale of novelty lighters. House Bill 1056 was introduced on January 4th by Indiana Representative Randy Frye. The bill would require the State Fire Marshal to make a list of novelty lighters. The bill makes the manufacture or import of a novelty lighter for sale, distribution, or resale a crime. An interesting component is that it provides that funds collected as judgments for novelty lighter infractions are to be deposited in the fire and building services fund rather than the state general fund.

On January 26th, Indiana House Bill 1056 successfully passed the House for the third and final reading with a vote of 78 yeas and 19 nays. The bill is now in the Senate with sponsorship by Doug Eckerty and Susan Glick. The bill unanimously (11-0) passed the House Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee on January 17th.

The fifteen states which have passed laws banning or limiting the sale of novelty and toylike lighters are Maine, Tennessee, Oregon, Arkansas, Virginia, Washington, Nevada, Louisiana, North Carolina, New Jersey, Utah, Mississippi, Illinois, Massachusetts and Hawaii.

Tim O'Dowd of FEMA maintains a web page that monitors the legislation related to novelty and toylike lighters, including links to the actual legislation. Novelty/Toylike Lighters Website www.usfa.fema.gov/noveltylighters

These are some of the latest toylike lighters hitting the shelves. They are long — like barbecue lighters.



Resources



Photo: On-scene during taping of the new school arson video (l to r) Krista Fischer, Timothy Kopet, Judy Okulitch, Troy DeYoung, Pat McAbery.

Updated school arson program available

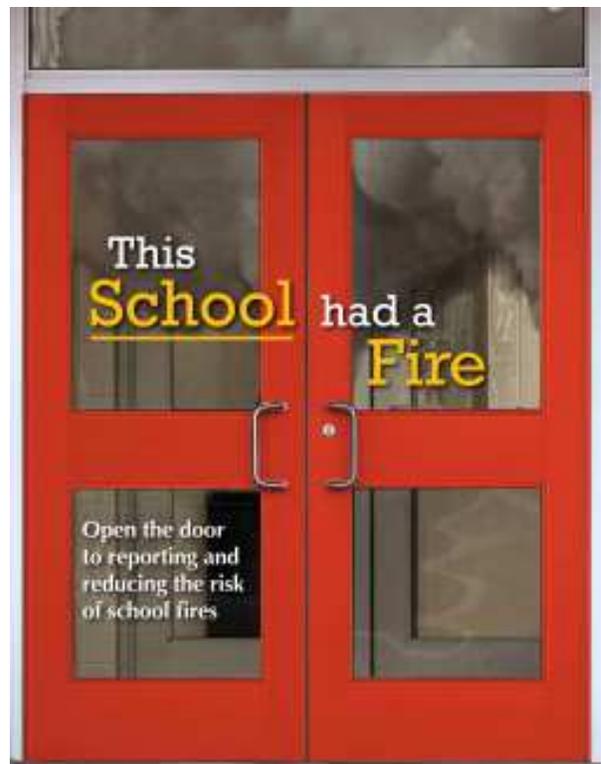
The Office of State Fire Marshal, in partnership with Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) and Property and Casualty Coverage for Education (PACE), completed an update of Oregon's school arson prevention program.

The new program includes a three and half minute DVD, brochure, arson reward posters, sprinkler system checklist and fire reporting laws. The DVD showcases the value of the fire service, school administrators, mental health professionals and the insurance industry working together to address the intentionally-set fire problem in schools. SDAO member fire districts in their general liability program may be eligible for a \$500 grant to help offset any costs of providing this program to their local schools.

The kit is available to all fire departments and schools in Oregon. For those outside Oregon, the kit is on the Office of State Fire Marshal's website under school resources. <http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM>

Originally implemented in 2005, the program helps foster relationships between fire districts and their school districts in reporting all school fires. Currently, fifty fire departments are participating in the school arson program with SDAO. Local experts participating in the DVD include McMinnville Fire Marshal Eric McMullen, Dr.

Timothy Kopet from FireSafe Children and Families, Casey Waletich from Hillsboro School District, and Troy DeYoung from Special Districts Association of Oregon.



Creating a firestorm:

A review of children who deliberately light fires

Ian Lambie , Isabel Randell

Psychology Department, University of
Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

In this review of child and adolescent firesetting literature, study authors Lambie and Randell found a link between firesetting and antisocial behavior. They also found that existing firesetting typologies are theoretical and untested — a situation which undermines their significance in a clinical setting. In their search, Lambie and Randell found no consistent, empirically-derived findings about the causes of youth firesetting. Lambie and Randell concluded that there is a need for collaborative intervention, including comprehensive assessment, and treatment appropriate to the needs of the individual. The authors suggest directions for future research.

A study abstract and access to the article in full can be found at:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272735811000055>

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Hot Issues subscription is free of charge.

State Fire Marshal: Mark Wallace

Program Coordinator: Judith Okulitch



From left: Charles Luxton, Judith Okulitch, Rachael Lind and William B. Kramer, Jr.

New Jersey Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Conference

The New Jersey Division of Fire Safety, the Kean University Fire Safety Training program, and the International Association of Arson Investigators, New Jersey Chapter, presented the ninth annual juvenile firesetter conference at the Middlesex County Fire Academy, in Sayreville in December of 2011.

As an indication of the global reach of the problem of juvenile firesetting, Rachael Lind, National Trainer, Fire Awareness and Intervention Program (NZFAIP) of the New Zealand Fire Service, addressed attendees in a plenary session. (Of note: Rachael visited intervention programs in the United States to survey their protocols. Her report of those visits is available on the New Zealand Fire Service website. <http://www.fire.org.nz/Pages/Home.aspx>)

Judith Okulitch, Coordinator for the Youth Fire Prevention and Intervention Program at the Office of the State Fire Marshal in Oregon, keynoted the conference. Ms. Okulitch addressed the relatively slow adoption by the fire service of social media as an instructional tool for public education purposes, noting that a fire safety education message must appear there in order to reach the very young people who are most at risk for firesetting behaviors.

Conferences & Trainings

CONFERENCE

NE Juvenile Firesetting Conference Strengthening our Homes : From Incident to Outcome

May 10-11, 2012
Natick, MA

The 2012 theme, "from incident to outcome," focuses on the critical importance of providing a range of services and interventions for families in order to strengthen their capacities to keep children safe. Workshop content will include topics relevant to attendees representing fire service, education, mental health, state agency/child protective service, burn care, law enforcement and juvenile justice professionals. Registration materials are available online at: www.brandonschool.org

CONFERENCE

Fire and Life Safety Educators Conference of the Rockies

April 18 - 20, 2012
Estes Park, Colorado

This conference is the premier professional development conference for fire and life safety professionals and one of the top conferences of its kind in the nation. Speakers from across the country will share information on innovative programs, new technologies and techniques for reaching our target audiences better, and ideas for developing successful programs within our shrinking budgets. The conference brochure lists the classes scheduled for 2012. The brochure is available online at: <http://www.firesafetyeducators.org/conference.html>



NFPA 1035 Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I Training in Oregon

This class prepares fire service personnel to complete the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) Task Book for the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1035 certification as a Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I in Oregon.

Two separate trainings are being offered:

Ontario, Oregon

April 12-13, 2012, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Treasure Valley Community College
650 College Blvd (Main campus)
Weese Building, Room 104

Warrenton, Oregon

May 30-31, 2012, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Warrenton Fire Dept.
225 S Main Avenue
Warrenton, OR

Registration required. Informational flyer and registration form available on the Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) website at: <http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/Training.shtml>

Photo on front page is from an NFPA 1035 class in Coos Bay, Oregon.