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Arson Awareness Week aimed at preventing youth firesetting

The Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal is pleased to partner with U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), Safe Kids USA, USAonWatch, National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), and the National Association of State Fire Marshals to announce the theme for the May 6-12, 2012, Arson Awareness Week (AAW): *Prevent Youth Firesetting*.

This year's theme is intended to raise public awareness of the collaborative effort with fire and emergency service departments, law enforcement, mental health, social services, schools, and juvenile justice to help reduce the incidents of youth misusing fire.

Oregon data shows there were more than 500 reported youth set fires in 2010-2011. The majority of these fires were started by youths from 10-15 years of age.

"Most people don't realize the serious consequences of youth-set fire behavior," said Oregon Chief Deputy State Marshal Jim Walker. "Whether it's a young child misusing a cigarette lighter or a teen setting a fire for the fun of it, these behaviors are risky, can be deadly, and result in thousands of dollars in property loss."

Parents need to be aware they may be held financially responsible for property damage or injuries resulting from a youth-set fire. Youths should be aware they could be cited with a criminal offense for setting an intentional fire (e.g. arson or reckless burning) and face serious legal, financial, and emotional consequences.

Youths who do not understand the power of fire can be seriously burned.

Here are some fire safety tips for parents/caregivers:

- If your teens have a fascination with fire, check their bedroom for matches, lighters, flammable liquids, fireworks, and other devices.
- Monitor the internet sites your teen frequents.
- If your teen burns candles or incense, be sure to set clear rules that these items must be extinguished before leaving the room or going to bed.
- Keep matches and lighters out of sight and reach of young children at all times.
- Have working smoke alarms in your home and practice a home escape plan.

If you are concerned because your child repeatedly sets fires, contact your local fire department now, before tragedy occurs. Oregon has an effective, well-developed network of concerned firefighters, law enforcement officers, and counselors.

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