



HOT ISSUES



California to join 9 states in banning novelty, toylike, lighters

California's state senate recently voted in support of Assembly Bill 625 prohibiting a person, including a manufacturer, distributor, importer, or retailer, from selling, offering for sale, distributing, or offering for promotion an operable novelty lighter. When signed by the governor, California will join nine other states to pass legislation banning novelty, toylike, lighters. The other states are: Maine, Tennessee, Oregon, Arkansas, Virginia, Washington, Nevada, Louisiana, and North Carolina (www.usfa.dhs.gov).



Professionals working with intervention programs for juveniles with fire and their families have been educating the public for years about the issues concerning toylike lighters and the dangers associated with them. James Floros, Executive Director of the Burn Institute in San Diego, was instrumental in leading the charge in California. Mr. Floros shared his delight about the recent success with *Hot Issues*, *"The Burn Institute is thrilled with the California legislature's passing of a ban on toylike lighters. We're very proud to have played a role and proud that San Diego County communities were some of the first in the nation to enact their own ban. Hats off to the Oregon State Fire Marshal's office -- they were our inspiration and really started the ball rolling."*



Long time advocates of legislation banning the import, distribution, and sales of novelty lighters are confident that California legislation will expedite action in Washington, D.C. The Protect Children from Dangerous Lighters Act of 2009 (H.R. 2050), was presented to the House of Representatives in April 2009 and has been referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Hot Issues encourages you to contact your state representatives to express your support of The Protect Children from Dangerous Lighters Act of 2009.



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An Oregon intervention highlights the importance of cultural competency

by Joseph Troncoso

I received a referral from an arson investigator following a residential fire. The fire's origin was determined to be paper ignited in the waste basket in the bathroom. The fire was contained to the bathroom, but the walls and adjacent cabinets were destroyed. Two Hispanic boys, ages 8 and 11, were home alone at the time. The investigator indicated the family spoke only Spanish, so communication at the scene was difficult. The investigator concluded the two boys ignited the paper, but they denied any involvement.

As a native-language Spanish speaker, I contacted the mother who said that the family was moving back to Mexico, but she agreed to bring the boys in for an intervention prior to their departure. The intervention was conducted in Spanish, although both boys spoke English fairly well. The boys told me that their father burned a candle the night before the fire and left the lighter lying beside the candle. The younger of the two boys took the lighter into the bathroom and lit tissue paper. It burned quickly and he dropped it into the waste basket, which already had a significant amount of paper inside. As the fire grew, the boys fled and a neighbor called 9-1-1. The boys lied to the investigator because they were frightened by the fire and were scared of what might happen to them.

Using the Oregon *Juvenile with Fire Screening Tool*, which is available in English and Spanish, I determined that fire education was necessary. I covered access to fire tools in depth with the parents, as well as supervision concerns. I discussed the legal & natural consequences that can result from the misuse of fire. We discussed tools and toys and the proper uses of each. Choices and decision-making skills were also covered. The mother was grateful for the intervention, as she said they don't have any similar programs in Mexico.

It is important to recognize the cultural differences and how they can affect us in our work. In other countries, police and uniformed per-

sonnel are not trusted, often with good reason. I will sometimes wear my firefighter T-shirt for an intervention with Spanish-speaking families, rather than my collared shirt with badges and shoulder patches.

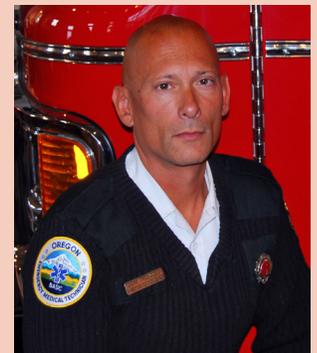
Although I am able to conduct screenings and educational interventions in Spanish, there are many fire departments that cannot. There is a need to develop suitable educational intervention videos to serve the needs of Spanish families.

I am a member of the FireSafe Children and Families program, which serves families in Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties in Oregon. The program, funded by a USFA Assistance to Firefighters grant, consists of personnel from fire departments, juvenile justice and mental health agencies. FireSafe Children and Families is funding the production of a Spanish language video which will provide needed fire safety education for youth with firesetting issues and their parents and caregivers.

The Spanish video will make its debut at the Western Juvenile Firesetting Conference (see page 4).

Visit the Firesafe Children and Families website:
www.firesafekidsandfamilies.org

Joseph Troncoso is the Program Manager for Portland, Oregon's Fire & Rescue's, Juvenile Fire Setting Intervention Program. In the last eight years, he's handled 682 cases. He is also the director of Portland Fire & Rescue's "Bombero Program", which translates fire training from the USA and delivers it to Mexico, Central America and South America. In the past 10 years, 28 different firefighting courses have been translated into Spanish and delivered. Mr. Troncoso is on the Advisory Board of Fire-Safe Children and Families and is an instructor in the intervention program.



If you have information about cultural competent practices and resources within your juvenile with fire intervention program or if you have identified needs related to cultural competency, we'd like to hear from you. Please e-mail Helen Feroli, Editor, at helen.feroli@state.or.us

Update: Retrofit home sprinkler system extinguishes fire in foster home

Eight years ago *Hot Issues* reported on a collaborative project that retrofitted a foster parents' home with a fire sprinkler system. "The goal of the project was to create a safe environment for this foster family who willingly care for juvenile firesetters in their home. Firesetting is often one of many 'acting out' behaviors that troubled children use to get attention...there is a natural reluctance to accept these kids in a foster home. The sprinklers provide a level of security for the foster care providers so children can be [placed] in an environment more suited to recovery" (*Hot Issues*, Winter 2009).

A fire occurred in the home on August 15, 2009 when the pump for the family's fish tank caught fire in a hallway area. The sprinklers extinguished the

fire limiting property damage to the small area where the fire started. All 7 occupants walked away from the incident; including the foster parents' only son, who had been sleeping on the other side of

the wall where the fire broke out. The family was able to reenter the home that evening. Most importantly, the foster parents' house is still standing, serving an important role in the community by helping foster children in a firesafe home environment. The firefighters of Lane County Fire District #1 were able to quickly return back to service, instead of fighting a house fire for hours, reducing the risk of injury or death.

Hot Issues thanks Heather Miller, Lane County Fire District #1 Fire Marshal, for sharing this success story.



Photo by Stan Turner, Lt., Lane County Fire District #1, Oregon

Hot Issues is going paperless



After nearly twenty years of paper publication, 'HOT ISSUES' will begin providing a paperless subscription to our readers beginning December 2009.

We hope an electronic publication will make it easier and more efficient for our readers to keep update to date on intervention activities, trends, legislation, and available resources.

Due to increased printing costs we are not able to continue to provide hardcopy mailings to all readers. At this time, we will continue to print a limited number hardcopy mailings for readers who do not have access to the electronic publication.

Please complete a subscription request form to update your contact information to include your email address. The form is available on-line at:

<http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/OSFM/>

or by contacting:

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Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program
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WESTERN JUVENILE FIRESETTING CONFERENCE

"FROM SPARK TO FINISH"

OCTOBER 8-9, 2009

THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL CONFERENCE AND EDUCATION CENTER
AURORA, COLORADO



Please join us in beautiful Aurora, Colorado and draw upon the expertise of a diverse group of professionals from across the country who are engaged in the providing services to juveniles who have engaged in firesetting behavior and their families. Conference highlights include:

- Arson Investigation on the Scene & JFS within the Court Process
 - Tips for Working through the Legislative Process
 - JFS in Rural Communities: Culture and Fire
- A Low-Tech look at the Internet, Fire, and Juvenile Justice
- Multicultural Interventions: Working with Spanish-speaking Families

For Registration Information, please contact Veronica Garza at garza.veronica@tchden.org or 720-777-6661. We hope to see you in Aurora!

Hot Issues is a quarterly newsletter of information and ideas for those concerned about juvenile firesetting. It is published by the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal. Please submit news, announcements, articles, suggestions or resources for review to Hot Issues. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this publication is available in alternate formats by calling 503-934-8240. Subscriptions are free of charge. Also available on the Office of State Fire Marshal web site: <http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/OSFM/>