

## is child fire play and **fire** setting a problem?

Fires set by young children in the U.S. annually result in:<sup>1</sup>

- 67,500 fires
- 230 deaths
- 1,800 injuries
- \$235 million in property damage

## is juvenile **arson** a problem?

The FBI Crime Index reports that juvenile and adult arson cause an annual average of 560,000 fires, 750 deaths, 3,700 injuries, and \$1.5 billion in property loss.

- 55% of all arson arrests in the U.S. are children under 18.
- Nearly half of these are age 15 and under.
- 6.8% are under the age of 10.
- The crime of arson has the highest rate of juvenile involvement.

**The first step in solving the problem is to understand better which children set fires and why they do it.**

## Curiosity/Experimental

- Boys and girls ages 2 to 10 (sometimes younger)
- Lack understanding of the destructive potential of fire
- Ready access to lighters, matches, or open flame
- Unsupervised

## Troubled Firesetters

- Mostly boys of all ages
- Have set two or more fires
- Use fire to express anger, sadness, frustration, or powerless feelings related to stress or major changes in their life
- May not understand the consequences of uncontrolled fire
- Will continue to set fires until needs are identified and met
- Also known as “crisis” or “cry for help” firesetters

## Delinquent/Criminal

- Usually teens with a history of firesetting, truancy, antisocial behavior, or drug/alcohol abuse
- Fires are set with intent to destroy, or as acts of vandalism and malicious mischief
- Targets are typically schools, open fields, dumpsters, or abandoned buildings
- May involve restitution and criminal punishment if determined to be arson

## Emotionally Disturbed

### Psychiatric Diagnosis

- Fire may be random, ritualized, or with specific intent to destroy property (arson)
- Chronic history of school behavioral, social, emotional, or physical problems
- Boys or girls, all ages
- Set many fires

## A CALL TO ACTION! COMMUNITIES NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## who **should** be involved?

### Everyone in the community...

parents and caregivers, the local fire and police departments, mental health counselors and social services, juvenile justice, schools, churches, medical community, youth service workers, public and private business, insurance industry, and other community leaders.

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Fire Protection Association