



Arson Prevention

The ravages of arson is a concern in Winnipeg. Everyone should be aware of the dangers that arson represents, and TakeAction to protect themselves, their families and their property from this devastating crime.

THE FIRE TRIANGLE

Fire is a chemical reaction that needs three ingredients for it to occur:

- *Oxygen* - is present in the air that we breathe. There cannot be a fire if there is no oxygen.
- *Heat* – can come from friction, like when a match is struck - or from a spark like when two stones strike each other or an electrical arc.
- *Fuel* – is anything that is combustible - like wood, paper or cloth.

Things like gas, paint thinner or aerosol spray are fire *accelerants*. It only takes the fumes from these to cause fire. These fumes are invisible, heavier than air, and sometimes you cannot even smell them. Keeping these things anywhere near a pilot light could have disastrous consequences.



FIRE FACTS

- ***FAST***: In 30 seconds, a simple flame can be out of control. Curtains can catch fire within 2 minutes and within 5 minutes; your whole house could be ablaze.
- ***HOT***: Fire heat can be worse than the flames. The air itself can sear your lungs and the heat is so intense that your clothes burn to your skin.
- ***DARK***: The smoke from fires causes almost total blackouts.
- ***SMOKE and GASSES***: In addition to the heat and flames from a fire, the smoke is also very dangerous. It contains poisons that could kill you. And remember, because oxygen is one of the components that make up a fire - you are competing with the fire for this precious resource.
- ***FLASHOVER***: Happens when everything in a room, from an armchair to a television, becomes superheated and bursts into flames at the same time. This can happen in as little as 3 minutes after a fire has started.

FIRE MYTHS

- ***Myth #1***: It is normal for children to play with fire.
It is **NOT** normal for children to play with fire. Curiosity about fire is common, however, use without a parent's approval or knowledge is dangerous to the child and everyone around them.
- ***Myth #2***: If you burn a child's hand, they will stop playing with fire.
Burning a child's hand can create fear and scars, and is against the law. The reason behind the firesetting must be discovered and addressed.
- ***Myth #3***: Firesetting is a phase the child will outgrow.
Firesetting is **NOT** a phase. It is dangerous behaviour. You cannot afford to wait for fire behaviour to change. It only takes one match to cause serious injury or death.
- ***Myth #4***: Some children are obsessed by fire.
In reality, very few children are obsessed. There is almost always a reason behind firesetting behaviour.

PROFILES OF FIRESETTERS

CURIOUS FIRESETTER

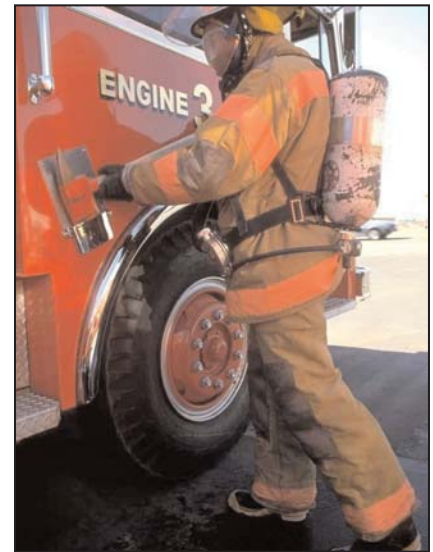
- Typically a younger child with low impulse control
- Usually a hands on learner who is active and explores the environment
- May experience fear, sadness or loss as a result of setting the fire
- May continue to set fires without intervention

Firesetting Behaviours

- Typically uses matches or lighters and ignites items found in the home
- Unsophisticated fires set in hidden location
- May try to extinguish the fire or may ignore it

Family or Social Dynamics

- Come from various types of households, but usually have a lack of supervision
- Have easy access to sources of ignition and a general lack of safety awareness
- Caregivers may deny their child's involvement and often respond with fear and embarrassment to a firesetting incident. They may have previously tried to stop the child's behaviour.



TROUBLED FIRESETTER

- Usually has a history of firesetting and has experienced a recent crisis or trauma
- They have poor coping skills, lack problem solving skills and are unable to express or identify with feelings
- They show a lack of appropriate remorse after setting a fire
- Will often deny or lie about the cause of the fire

Firesetting Behaviours

- Typically uses matches or lighters and ignites relatively unsophisticated fires
- Fires are often motivated by frustration and may be a cry for help and/or symbolic of a crisis

Family or Social Dynamics

- Come from various types of households, but they usually are raised in a chaotic environment
- It is possible that there have been instances of neglect or abuse
- Have easy access to sources of ignition and a general lack of safety awareness

DELINQUENT FIRESETTER

- Typically an adolescent with poor interpersonal skills who lacks good judgment and is impulsive and irresponsible
- Often a risk taker who opposes authority with a history of academic and/or behavioral problems
- Often deny or lie about the origin of the fire
- Are embarrassed and afraid of the consequences when caught

Firesetting Behaviours

- Can set school fires - but often sets fires out of doors
- Fires are often set with peers and are not sophisticated in nature
- Often uses fireworks, smoke bombs and sets off false alarms
- Has a history of firesetting and will use common accelerants to set the fire

Family or Social Dynamics

- Individual is peer dominated
- Often comes from a dysfunctional family and has a lack of adequate supervision
- They are fearful of legal or financial consequences and are receptive to assistance
- Caregivers have made numerous attempts to obtain help and are embarrassed and/or angry about the setting of fires

STRATEGIC FIRESETTER

- Typically a teenager with a history of delinquent behaviour who may have been involved with the Youth Justice System
- Regard any legal consequences of their actions as a joke, and have a failure to experience any guilt about what they have done
- Have low self esteem and may brag to their peers about the fires
- There is a probable gang affiliation and there is usually a history of substance use or abuse

Firesetting Behaviours

- Fires typically have multiple points of origin and are often set in conjunction with other crimes
- Fires are often set with peers and they usually use accelerants
- Fires are often well planned and set to cause harm or destruction - or as revenge fires

Family or Social Dynamics

- They are usually alienated from caretakers and society with a history of school problems as well as a history of substance use or abuse
- Individual is peer dominated with little or no family involvement
- Caretakers will defer responsibility for this person's actions

PATHOLOGICAL FIRESETTER

- Very very few of these
- Possibly have a high I.Q. - but can have a history of severe emotional problems
- Have had academic and behavioral problems and often have a difficulty establishing relationships
- Have a history of medical and/or neurological problems
- Are likely to have been a victim of physical or sexual abuse
- Are a loner who has a life-long fascination with fire

Firesetting Behaviours

- Has a long history of firesetting with multiple incidents
- Fires are sophisticated, cleverly set, and are often ritualistic with a distinct pattern. They are usually very destructive
- They are secretly proud of the fires they set

Family or Social Dynamics

- Come from various types of households, but they usually are raised in a chaotic environment
- It is possible that there have been instances of neglect or abuse
- Have easy access to sources of ignition and a general lack of safety awareness

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS

Here are some things to watch for when you know of a suspected Firesetter. Some of these could apply to any child, even those with no problems at all, but they should be considered when you are evaluating a child's risk of being a firesetter:

Traits To Look For

- Poor relationships with other children
- Frequent jealousy
- Breaking of other children's toys
- Frequent fighting

Behaviours

- Impulsiveness
- Showing off
- Property destruction
- Running away and skipping school
- Stealing

Parental or Home Situation

- Divorce or separation
- Living with relatives
- Extended hospitalization
- History of abuse

RISK EVALUATION FOR CHILDREN

Little Risk

- Two parents that are warm and loving, open and able to discipline
- No school behaviour or academic problems
- Adults in the home are non-smokers

Definite Risk

- Absent or inattentive father
- Overly harsh methods of discipline
- Lack of affection
- Disruptive in school with poor academic performance
- One or more adults in the home are smokers

Extreme Risk

- Single parent at home with lack of attention
- Does not obey family rules
- Lacks motivation to perform well in school and/or has repeated school behaviour problems - including have been suspended or expelled

THREE THINGS PARENTS SHOULD DO

► **Teach Your Children About Fire**

- Fire is a tool not a toy
- Fire is dangerous and can easily get out of control
- Adults using fire must follow special safety rules

► **Control Your Children's Access To Fire**

- Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children
- Always monitor cooking, lit candles, fires and hot appliances

► **Set A Good Example**

- Remember that children imitate adults
- Point out the safety precautions that you use around fire
- Install and maintain working smoke detectors
- Post Emergency numbers - 911
- Develop and practice a home escape plan, and where to meet outside the home
- Practice STOP DROP and ROLL



OBTAINING HELP FOR A CHILD

- If your child has played with fire on more than one occasion and does not respond to your educational efforts, has deliberately set a fire, or if you suspect or find evidence that they are firesetting and you are unsure of how to educate them:
- Phone the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service Fire Prevention Branch at 986-6358 and ask about the Youth Fire Stop Program.

TAKEACTION - COMBAT ARSON

At Home - Outdoors

- Store all flammable material safely.
- Garbage, leaves, lumber and bulky waste like mattresses and couches should be disposed of properly.
- Put all garbage in sealed bags and place inside garbage can or Autobin.
- If your Autobin is full - place the garbage in a nearby bin.
- Large bulky items should be stored at the rear of your yard near the lane (if you have one). Call 986-5858 to have these items removed.
- If you see garbage lying on the ground or roadway - pick it up and place it in a can or Autobin.
- Firewood should be kept well away from the house or garage.
- Place adequate lighting around your home and garage - so Arsonist have nowhere to hide.

At Home - Indoors

- When building or renovating - ensure that all building and fire codes are complied with.
- Be alert to any smoke or unusual odors in or around your home.
- Consider the installation of a burglar and fire alarm system with an audible alarm.
- Keep a photographic inventory and record serial numbers of all valuables and property.
- Do not allow mail to accumulate in your mailbox or mail slot.

Practice Fire Safety

- Install smoke detectors - change the batteries once a year - and test your smoke detectors monthly.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach and out of sight of young children.
- Develop and practice a home escape plan - and review it with your family.
- Keep Emergency numbers handy.
- Do not store combustibles in a furnace room or near a hot water heater.
- Keep all flammable liquids locked away in a safe place.
- Do not leave any exit area cluttered - make sure exit pathways are clear in case of an emergency.

Cooperate With Investigators

- Cooperate with Police, Fire and Insurance investigators.
- If there is a fire in your area - inform the investigators of any suspicious persons or activities that you may have witnessed.
- Note the colour of the smoke coming from a fire - or the presence of absence of explosions that you witness prior to the arrival of Fire crews. Pass this information on to investigators - it may be important.

Get Involved!

- If you see ANY crime in progress or witness a fire - phone 911 immediately.
- If you see anything suspicious in your neighbourhood - phone the police at 986-6222.
- Join or form a Neighbourhood Watch program or a Neighbourhood Patrol program.
- For information on Neighbourhood Watch - phone the Winnipeg Police at 986-6322.
- For information on Neighbourhood Patrol - phone Provincial Justice Department at 945-6782.
- Report insecure abandoned buildings to the police at 986-6222.
- Report street or back lane lights that are out to Winnipeg Hydro at 986-2341 or Manitoba Hydro at 474-4990.

**If you have any information or any questions about Arson in our Community -
call the Arson Strike Force at 986-1000.**

*If you wish more information or have any questions about Arson Prevention, please
contact the Winnipeg Police Service Community Relations Unit at 986-6322, the Winnipeg
Fire Paramedic Service Fire Prevention Branch at 986-6358 OR
telephone the Arson Strike Force at 986-1000.*