



# A Special Message for Teachers About Children and Fire

Children and fire are a deadly combination, but many parents, teachers, and other adults gravely underestimate this problem. That's why **Sound Off with the Home Fire Safety Patrol** is so important, and why we appreciate your help in bringing it to the students and families you care about.

**Sound Off** focuses primarily on making sure every home is protected with working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms make different sounds and it is very important that kids and families understand what to do when the alarm "beeps" or "chirps." Working smoke alarms save lives.

But as a teacher, there is something else you should know about kids and fire. Children are at high risk of injury or even death from fires they or other children set. Some children set fires out of curiosity, without realizing the danger. Some use firesetting as a bid for attention. Children in crisis may set fires intentionally as a way of acting out their anger or frustration. Left unchecked, children playing with fire can progress to more dangerous levels, increasing the risk of injuries, property loss, or even death. In fact, in 2014, 34 percent of arson arrests were of children under the age of 18, with 20 percent being children between the ages of 10 and 14.

## What Can Teachers Do?

- Help educate adults in your community about keeping all matches and lighters out of the sight and reach of children, preferably in a high, locked cabinet. Adults should keep matches and lighters in their possession at all times. Think of all fire tools as having the same deadly potential as a loaded weapon.
- Educate adults to only use disposable lighters with child resistant features. Note: child-resistant lighters are **not child-proof** and are still very dangerous in the hands of a youngster.
- If you suspect that a student in your classroom is setting fires, inform the child's parents or caregivers of your concern immediately. Work together to get professional intervention. Support local efforts to draw together fire department specialists, mental health professionals, juvenile justice representatives, and other advocates in a comprehensive strategy involving effective fire prevention education for all children and targeted intervention programs for identified firesetters.

To learn more, please visit the "Information for Caregivers" section of the Youth Firesetting Information & Evaluation System (YFIRES) website at <https://yfires.com/information-for-caregivers>.