

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Fire and Life Safety for Children

Day, 20 January 2017

With school holidays in full swing, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) is urging parents and caregivers to ensure matches and lighters are kept well out of the reach of children.

MFS Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Colin Lindsay said children left alone while parents return to work in the New Year increases the risk of unsafe fire play and experimentation with lighting fires.

“Firefighters continue to respond to accidental fires caused by children curiously playing with matches and lighters. Recently a family had their Christmas ruined after a young child found a cigarette lighter lying around and played with it. Fortunately tragedy was averted on this occasion with the family managing to escape the blaze by scrambling to safety through a front window.

“We understand that it’s not always possible to supervise children and prevent them accessing and playing with matches and lighters, but we’re asking parents or caregivers to ensure they keep matches and lighters well out of reach of children. Storage above adult shoulder height and out of sight is recommended – and could prevent devastating fires being started,” Assistant Chief Fire Officer Lindsay said.

Parents or caregivers are encouraged to increase supervision and organise structured activities for children during the school holidays to ensure boredom and unsafe fire play don’t occur.

The **Juvenile Firefighters Intervention Program (JFLIP)** is provided by the MFS to assist families in addressing the problem of children and young people playing with fire.

Parents or caregivers with concerns about a child who has been lighting fires can ring the MFS on 1300 737 637 to enquire about the program (during business hours).

JFLIP is delivered by MFS firefighters who have been specially trained to work with children. **The program is free and completely confidential** and has been running successfully in SA for over 20 years.

The MFS recommends the following safety tips for parents, carers, friends and relatives who may look after children:

- **Keep matches, lighters and fire starters well out of reach of children.** Storage above adult shoulder height and out of sight is recommended.
- Teach young children that they must never touch matches and lighters. They must notify an adult if they see them lying around. Praise your children when they do so.
- Wherever possible avoid using candles if you have children. Torches and battery powered artificial candles are recommended as a safer option.
- If you must use candles, keep them up high, out of reach of children or flammable materials. Never leave children or pets unattended in a room with a candle burning. A child should not sleep in a room with a lit candle.
- Ensure your family has a Home Fire Escape Plan. Practise the plan with the children to ensure everyone understands what to do in the event of a fire.

The MFS strongly urges families to combine the above safety tips with hard-wired, interconnected, photo-electric smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old.

For media enquiries and interviews call the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770

Further information for the public:

Call the MFS Community Safety and Resilience Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours.
Country callers 1300 737 637.

www.mfs.sa.gov.au