



# HOT·ISSUES



## Arson Awareness Week

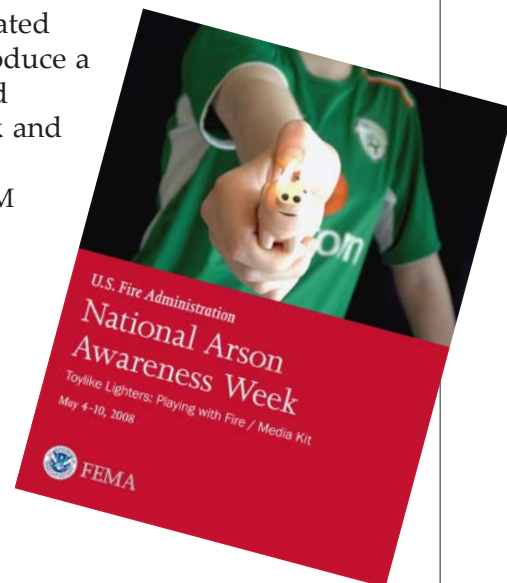
### *Toylike Lighters—Playing with Fire*

**May 4 - 10.** This year’s theme for Arson Awareness Week, *Toylike Lighters—Playing with Fire*, garnered national attention for the toylike lighter issue. Congratulations and a big thank you to all who helped raise the awareness level about the danger of novelty lighters.

A media kit and downloadable poster developed by the United States Fire Administration (USFA), in partnership with the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM), Fire Safe Children and Families Program, the National Volunteer Fire Council, the Idea Bank, and the International Association of Arson Investigators, were used all over the country. Shown to the left and below are the poster and the cover of the media kit. They made it easy to get the word out. Thanks to the USFA for developing these first-rate materials.

A few arson week activities we became aware of occurred in: El Paso, Texas, Wilmington, North Carolina, Beloit, Wisconsin, Palm Springs and Cathedral City, California, Lynn, Massachusetts, Gainesville, Georgia, Broward County, Florida, the Occupational Health and Safety Web site, and the Montana Fire and Rescue Newsletter.

In Oregon, KGW television station collaborated with the Office of State Fire Marshal to produce a public service announcement (PSA). It aired many times during Arson Awareness Week and clips from it continue to be played on the station. The PSA can be viewed on the OSFM Web site\*, along with other campaign materials provided for Oregonians.



### *Inside Hot Issues...*

Toylike lighters spotted in Washington, DC and Chicago, IL ... 2

CFSI resolution to ban toylike lighters ... 3

Oregon lawmakers urged to ban novelty lighters ... 4

Testimony in support of a ban on novelty lighters ... 5

Treatment and intervention issues: new research studies ... 6

“Words ... choose carefully” revisited ... 7

Resources ... 8

\* [http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/Novelty\\_Toylike\\_Lighters.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/Novelty_Toylike_Lighters.shtml)

**Toys?  
or lighters?**

This information brought to you  
by a partnership of  
National Association of State Fire Marshals  
Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal  
United States Fire Administration

# Toylike lighters spotted in Washington, DC, and Chicago, IL



Oregon State Fire Marshal Nancy Orr and Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Coordinator Judy Okulitch kicked off arson awareness activities in April when they traveled to Washington, DC, to attend the Congressional Fire Services Institute’s Fire and Emergency Showcase on the National Mall. They staffed a display about the dangers of toylike lighters and met with Oregon’s congressional representatives to make them aware of the issue. The offices of Oregon Representative Darlene Hooley and Senator Ron Wyden have shown interest in drafting a bill to ban their sale in the United States. Other Oregon congressional representatives are supporting the effort.

Also in April, Judy Okulitch and *Hot Issues* Editor Carol Baumann presented at the American Burn Association’s annual conference in Chicago. The focus of their presentations, in workshop and poster format, was the danger of toylike lighters. The conference drew over 2,000 specialists in the prevention and treatment of burn injuries. Several burn treatment hospitals have pledged to begin tracking burn injuries resulting from toylike lighters.



These toys and lighters (photos below and above right) were shown to the Oregon legislative committee informational hearing on toylike lighters. In each photo, can you tell which item is the lighter? (See page 8 for the answers.)





# Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI) resolution to ban novelty lighters

*Resolution to support initiatives to ban the sale and use of novelty lighters in the United States*

*Offered by:*

*National Association of State Fire Marshals*

Whereas 3,993 deaths and 17,875 injuries caused by fire were reported by the United States Fire Administration for the year 2004; and

Whereas children age nine and under comprised ten percent of all fire-related deaths and seven percent of all fire-related injuries for the year 2004; and

Whereas the National Association of State Fire Marshals reports that cigarette lighters being sold in their states that resemble toys and other objects appeal to children; and

Whereas the National Association of State Fire Marshals acknowledges that there have been fires and burn injuries resulting from children playing with so-called “novelty lighters” that resemble toys and other attractive objects; and

Whereas the United States Fire Administration established an operational objective to reduce the loss of life from fire in the age group 14 years old and younger; and

Whereas the Consumer Product Safety Commission has a strategic goal to reduce the rate of death from fire-related causes by 20 percent from 1998 to 2013; and

Whereas the Consumer Product Safety Commission requires certain lighters to be child resistant, but not all lighters that children consider attractive are covered under these requirements; and

Whereas the European Union recently required all cigarette lighters to be child-resistant, but at the same time recognized that novelty lighters have an inherently higher risk of misuse by children, and thus prohibited the sale of novelty lighters in the European Union as of March 11, 2007.

**Now, therefore, be it resolved that,** the Congressional Fire Services Institute support initiatives which would encourage the Consumer Product Safety Commission to follow the European Union in banning the sale and use of novelty lighters that appeal to children.

Note: While the resolution was approved by CFSI’s National Advisory Committee (NAC) as a whole, that does not mean each individual member of the NAC has endorsed the resolution.

**F**igurines of dolphins, micro-size motorcycles and miniature cameras can be amusing play-things for children — unless they shoot real flames that can burn tiny fingers and set houses on fire.

Given the widespread availability of such novelty lighters and their attraction for youngsters, firefighters and officials from the state fire marshal's office urged lawmakers Tuesday to ban their sale in Oregon.

"Lighters are tools for adults — not toys for children," said Judy Okulitch, coordinator of the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program in the fire marshal's office.

Tim Birr, a retired firefighter and chief who once worked for the Eugene Fire Department, described the tragedy that can result from such novelty lighters. While working for the Tualatin Valley Fire District in 2000, he was called to a house fire in Washington County. Firefighters pulled two boys, two and six years old, from a burning house. The younger child survived, but his brother was pronounced dead at the hospital.

It turned out, Birr said, that the boys' mother had left the home for a quick errand. On a front-room table she had left a cigarette lighter.

"A lighter designed to look like a dolphin; a lighter the younger boy appeared to have a fascination with," Birr said.

Okulitch told the House Committee on Consumer Protection that her office is working on legislation banning the sale and distribution of toylike novelty lighters.

Maine and Tennessee impose such bans, as do cities and counties across the United States.

Rep. Paul Holvey, a Eugene Democrat and the committee's chairman, said he expects the bill to be well-received — in part because it was clear how easily children could be attracted to the toylike lighters.

"These toy [like] lighters are pretty cool and if I were



## Oregon lawmakers urged to ban novelty lighters

By David Steves  
*The Register-Guard*, Eugene, OR  
June 18, 2008

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a kid, I'd probably want to play with them," he said.

Holvey's comment followed Okulitch's presentation of novelty lighters. She presented small, colorful items to lawmakers in pairs. Toy ducks, yellow bulldozers, miniature bears.

In every case, the two items were virtually identical. "The only difference," she said, pointing to one of two otherwise indistinguishable green tractors, is "the one on the left has an ignition and shoots a flame."

Okulitch has collected dozens of such examples: tiny replicas of milk and juice cartons, rifles, pistols and bullets, pigs, turtles, cell phones, paint brushes, felt-tip markers, wrenches and power drills.

And perhaps the most galling to the firefighters called out to blazes started by such lighters:

Sparky, the Dalmatian fire dog. Pressing on his red fire helmet triggers a flame to shoot from his mouth.

Lobbyists for grocery stores and retail chains sat in on the hearing but did not testify. Afterward, they said their clients don't sell such novelty lighters and most likely would not object to a ban.

Okulitch said she has found such items sold in Oregon convenience and liquor stores.

She said the reason they end up on display in stores, and eventually in homes throughout Oregon, is that adults are attracted to them as novelty items. She said it's not until consumers and retailers are made aware of the danger they pose in a child's hands that they're understood as dangerous.

"They're attractive and cute," she said. "People don't make that jump that they might be attractive to a child."

Editor's note: Letters supporting the Office of State Fire Marshal legislative concept on banning the sale of toylike lighters were sent to the committee from Oregon Fire District Directors Association, Oregon Fire Chiefs Association, National Fire Protection Association, and Oregon Burn Center.

Editor's note: Tim Birr presented the following eloquent testimony at the June 17 informational hearing on toylike lighters to the House Interim Committee on Consumer Protection.

**G**ood morning. My name is Tim Birr. I am a thirty-year veteran of the Oregon fire service, now retired, who spent time with the Eugene Fire Department and Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue (TVF&R), retiring from the latter agency as a division chief in 2003. As a result of my experiences, I have opted in my retirement to be an active member of the Oregon Fire Safety Coalition, in which capacity I appear before you today.

I want to open this morning's hearing with a brief anecdote. On the afternoon of January 12, 2000, I was working in my office at TVF&R headquarters when a call was dispatched, reporting a house fire in the northern part of our district and stating that children might be trapped inside. Fire Chief Jeff Johnson, whose office was next to mine, heard the call as well, and called to me that he was responding, asking if I wanted to respond with him.

With the benefit of lights and siren, it took us but a few minutes to arrive at the scene. On arrival, we saw a burning home and two boys, ages two and six, who had been pulled through a window from the burning house by their mother and a neighbor before firefighters arrived. The boys were lying, unconscious and unresponsive, on the front lawn of the home, where paramedics were desperately trying to resuscitate them. A woman, later confirmed to be the boys' mother, was frantically running about the front yard and inserting herself into the paramedics' efforts.

It fell to me to contain the mother, to restrain her, medically evaluate her own condition, and allow the paramedics to do their work. Both boys and their mother were subsequently transported to a local hospital.

One of the boys, the six-year-old, was pronounced dead shortly after arriving at the hospital. The two-year-old was listed in critical condition.

Investigators subsequently determined that the two boys had been left alone for a brief time while their mother picked up an older sibling at a local school.

## Testimony in support of a ban on novelty lighters

By Tim Birr  
Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue, retired

During this time, evidence suggests that one or both boys played with a lighter left on a table in the front room of the home ... a lighter designed to look like a dolphin ... a lighter the younger boy apparently had a fascination with.

I tell this story here this morning in a somewhat generic way ... no names and no addresses, for it understandably proved to be a major traumatic event in the life of this family. And it certainly was a major traumatic event for me ... those few minutes clutching that mother in the front yard, trying to think of things to say, rank high in an adult lifetime of emergencies and traumatic events.

And I tell this story here this morning because you need to know that it did happen, it does happen here, and it can happen here.

One of the things you'll find out as you consider the issue of toylike lighters is that there are no firm statistics as to how many fires in Oregon have been caused by children playing with these devices.

There's a simple reason for that.

The standardized fire report form used in Oregon is a simple "check the box, fill in the blank" type of form designed for ease of use by professional firefighters in busy units in Oregon's major cities, as well as volunteers who serve their rural communities while earning their daily bread in other jobs. It's a form designed to capture basic data, allowing fire managers to analyze trends and identify areas worthy of public awareness efforts or legislative action.

As it has for years, the form captures fires started by children playing with matches and lighters. The problem is that, the last time the form underwent major revision, no one in the Oregon fire service expected that anyone would design and market cigarette lighters, tools intended for the use of adults, as devices attractive to children ... as toy cars, cell phones, cameras, animals, rubber ducks ... even dolphins.

Sadly, we know better now.

# Treatment and intervention issues: new research studies

## The link between maltreatment and juvenile firesetting: Correlates and underlying mechanisms

By Dr. Carol Root

Despite the widely held belief that abuse is a risk factor for childhood firesetting, the role of maltreatment in firesetting is largely unexplored. This study reports on a sample of children and adolescents referred to TAPP-C, a brief assessment and intervention program for juvenile firesetters at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, Canada. Firesetting histories of maltreated youth were compared to a group of firesetting youth with no maltreatment history. Participants included 205 children and youth aged four to seventeen years and their caregivers, and assessments were completed with a standardized protocol. Forty-eight percent of the sample had a history of maltreatment as reported by caregivers; 26 percent experienced more than one type of maltreatment.

When compared to the non-maltreated group, children with histories of maltreatment demonstrated more frequent fire involvement, more versatility regarding ignition sources and targets, and a greater likelihood of an immediate family stressor as a motive for firesetting. Maltreated children were more likely to become involved with fire out of anger, and there was also a trend towards higher rates of recidivism. The influence of maltreatment on fire-related behavior was not direct. Rather, the findings suggest that a history of maltreatment increased children's vulnerability to emotional and behavioral regulation difficulties, which in turn led to a more serious course of fire involvement.

These findings highlight the need for mental health clinicians to: a) be aware that maltreatment and affect-regulation difficulties frequently co-occur within a juvenile firesetting population, b) screen for fire-related behaviors and maltreatment during general assessments, and c) consider maltreatment status when thinking about the risk of firesetting.

The full article can be found in the February 2008 issue of the international journal *Child Abuse and Neglect* (Volume 32) by the following authors: Drs. C. Root, S. MacKay, J. Henderson, G. Del Bove, and D. Warling.

## Efficacy of an early intervention program with juvenile firesetters

By Dr. Beth French

Many children engage in fireplay at young ages, however this can lead to dangerous outcomes. Nationally, in 2002, there were approximately 14,100 reported structure fires started by children leading to 210 civilian deaths, 1,250 civilian injuries, and causing \$339 million in damages (Hall, 2005a).

Characteristics of juvenile firesetters vary, along with their motivations for starting fires, making treatment complicated. There is no national program designed to treat juvenile firesetters, however many states have started their own programs.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the Washington County Fire Academy in Oregon. The study consists of thirteen participants ranging in age from eight to thirteen, with 69 percent of the participants being male. The study describes characteristics of the participants using the *Child Behavior Checklist* and the *Oregon Juvenile with Fire Screening Tool*.

The Washington County Fire Academy is a three-week-long program that meets twice a week. The academy involves both the parents and the children who started the fires and focuses on fire safety, feeling identification, problem solving, and communication between parents and the children. This is done in a group format. The effectiveness of the program was examined through a pre- and post-content test which both the parents and children took, a parent evaluation of the program, and a six-month follow-up phone call.

Results indicate a clinically significant difference in scores on the pre- and post-content test. The six-month follow-ups indicate that none of the thirteen children had engaged in fireplay behaviors. Further, parents rated most aspects of the program as helpful on the evaluation form and would recommend the program to other families. This gives preliminary evidence for the effectiveness of the Washington County Fire Academy.

Abstract above is from French's Ph.D. thesis done for the Graduate School of Clinical Psychology, George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon.

# Words ... choose carefully revisited

Editor's note: The response to an article (*Words ... choose carefully*) which appeared in the last edition of *Hot Issues* generated more feedback than anything we have ever published. It seems that many of you have been pondering this issue as well. We appreciate your thoughtful responses and offer some of them here. We continually find ourselves making mid-course verbal corrections as we struggle to make our vocabulary mirror our beliefs about juveniles and fire. Changing terminology isn't easy! So far, we are tending toward "juvenile with fire" or "juvenile involved with fire" rather than "firesetter" or "fire play." Leo DeVigil (letter below) has some excellent ideas. And, as Mark Wilson pointed out, our Web site needs to be updated in this regard. Thanks, Mark!

**From: Rick Chamberlain  
The Child Center  
Springfield, Oregon**

"Words... choose carefully" is an excellent article!  
Thank you!

I reviewed our mental health assessments today to see what language we are using to ask question(s) about the child's or adolescent's behavior involving fire. We are using "fire play" as a way to gather more information and find out if the kids we treat have any involvement with fire. I am happy to change fire play to a different word - can you help me with what the word or words might be? or one you would prefer? I guess we could use "juvenile involved with fire" or "involved with fire."

Since meeting with you some years back I added a fire involvement question to our mental health assessment for all the kids we see, not just the ones that had fire involvement already identified as a presenting problem. That was a good thing for us to do as we have been able to identify that problem for more kids and get better interventions going for those guys - usually in the form of better parent/caregiver supervision. We've also used your curriculum to craft more effective interventions.

Thank You!!! I'm making copies of the article for all my therapists.

**From: Mark Wilson  
Division Chief/Fire Marshal  
Lebanon, Oregon, Fire District**

Just read the latest *Hot Issues* and I have fallen right into line with you [Judy] and Carol about the words we use to describe the juveniles with fire situation . . . When I went to the OSFM website this morning, I saw the link for "Juvenile Firesetter Intervention." Shouldn't that be updated to "Juvenile with Fire?"

I hope you realize I am pointing this out with tongue in cheek. You are doing wonderful work and even though my schedule keeps me very busy, I don't want to be totally ignorant or naive about the juvenile situation.

**From: Leo R. DeVigil, Investigator  
Juvenile Firesetter Intervention  
Program Manager  
Denver, Colorado, Fire Department**

I was intrigued by your "Words" article in *Hot Issues*. In fact, it has reignited (pardon the pun) a very strong opinion of mine.

I, like you, believe that we are using outdated or incorrect terminology. A few years ago I wrote to the Massachusetts Coalition, Children's Hospital and some other well regarded institutions in juvenile firesetting on this very subject. [see Leo's suggestions for new terminology below]

I would like to learn more about the Oregon model and if it will be aligned more with yours and my opinion on the terminologies. If so, I would consider converting my program from the FEMA model to the Oregon model.

I look forward to hearing from you.

**Modified terminology suggested by DeVigil:**

"Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program"

Proposed: Juvenile Fire Education and Intervention Program

"Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist"

Proposed: Juvenile Fire Education and Intervention Specialist

"Juvenile Firesetter Contact (or Referral) Form"

Proposed: Juvenile Fire Incident Contact (or Referral) Form

"Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Class"

Proposed: Juvenile and Family Fire Education and Intervention Class

"Juvenile Firesetter Class" (attendees)

Proposed: Juvenile Fire Education Class Participants (refer to simply as "Juvenile")

**From: Tim Kopet, Psychologist in private practice  
Chair, Fire Safe Children & Families Program,  
Oregon**

I liked the article on the labels and wording. Well done.



**Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal**  
Department of State Police  
Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program  
4760 Portland Road NE  
Salem, OR 97305-1760

## Save the date!

**Cultivating Partnerships III**  
Town and Country Resort  
San Diego, CA  
September 17, 18, 19, 2008

Once again, fire and burn prevention agencies from Oregon, Colorado and California have teamed up to sponsor *Cultivating Partnerships III* on the issues facing interventionists, criminal justice agencies and other community partners who educate and intervene with juveniles misusing fire.

Speakers will present up-to-date information on issues such as cultural awareness, how children learn, juvenile arson, an in-depth case study, Metro Arson Strike Team demo, novelty lighter updates, and information about fire-safer cigarettes.

A special networking session is planned for September 17, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM.

Accommodations are at Town and Country Resort, 800-772-8527. Mention the conference and get a special room rate of \$99 per night.

Registration form and information about the conference are available on the San Diego Burn Institute Web site — [www.burninstitute.org](http://www.burninstitute.org).

## Save the date!

**Wisconsin Fire Inspectors/Public Educators Conference**  
Plaza Hotel & Suites  
Eau Claire, WI  
November 5, 6, 7, 2008

The track for public educators at the November conference to be held in Wisconsin should interest readers of *Hot Issues*. A session about juveniles and fire is being scheduled.

We'll have more details about the conference in a later edition. However, a block of rooms has been reserved for the event and lodging arrangements may be made at any time — (714) 834-3181.

Jill Glanz is a member of the planning committee. She can be reached with questions by phone at (414) 228-0292 and via email address at [jglanz@nsfire.org](mailto:jglanz@nsfire.org).



**Answer to the toy or lighter “quiz” on page 2.** The lighters are: the forklift on the left, the tractor on the left and the duck second from the left.

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*Hot Issues* is a quarterly newsletter of information and ideas for those concerned about juvenile with fire. 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 503.373.1540, ext. 240. Subscriptions are free of charge. Also available on the Office of State Fire Marshal Web site: <http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/>

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