



FEMA

July 30, 2009

A Message from the U.S. Fire Administrator about Novelty and Toylike Lighters

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) joins other national fire organizations in their support to ban the sale and distribution of novelty and toylike lighters. These organizations include the Congressional Fire Services Institute, the National Volunteer Fire Council, the National Association of State Fire Marshals, the International Fire Marshals Association, the International Association of Arson Investigators, and the Prevention Advocacy Resources and Data Exchange (PARADE) network.

Novelty and toylike lighters are linked to incidents of deaths, injuries, and property loss across the Nation. For decades the fire service and caregivers have taught children to avoid lighters and that they are tools, not toys. But children are attracted to novelty lighters because they look like toys such as animals, miniature cars, mobile phones, doll accessories, fishing lures, stacks of coins, markers, and cameras. It is nearly impossible for a child, and oftentimes an adult, to distinguish between what is a toy and what is a lighter. Unfortunately, this contributes to the disturbing statistics related to children and fire:

- Thirty-seven percent of fires were started by juveniles aged 10—17 where age was cited as a factor in a fire's ignition by lighters or matches.
- Children under the age of 5 are more than 8 times as likely to die in a fire caused by playing with a heat source than are people of all ages.
- Fires started by "playing" cause 38% of civilian fire deaths. Nineteen percent of these fire starters were 4 year olds.

USFA is providing assistance to our partners, elected officials, and private citizens across the United States by capturing data at the national level and providing access to information regarding these lighters. The National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) began collecting information in January 2008 specifically about these lighters and fires. The USFA sponsored the 2008 Arson Awareness Week with the theme: *Toylike Lighters - Playing with Fire*. Additionally, USFA's Web site provides easy access to current information on the novelty and toylike lighter issue at www.usfa.dhs.gov/noveltylighters.

There is growing legislative support to ban the sale and distribution of these lighters. As of June 2009, eight states have passed legislation limiting or prohibiting the sale of novelty lighters; another twelve are considering legislation. Federal legislation has been introduced with House Bill 2050 and Senate Bill 723; both are titled *Protect Children from Dangerous Lighters Act of 2009*.

I encourage every member of the fire service to support the local, state, and Federal initiatives to ban the sale and distribution of novelty and toylike lighters. Please stay vigilant and keep the fire service community informed of developments in your area. Only by working together can we save lives.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glenn A. Gaines".

Glenn A. Gaines
Acting Assistant Administrator
U.S. Fire Administration