



Iowa's Juvenile Fire Intervention Program

This program includes an interview of the child and the child's parents or guardians to try to determine the rationale for the fire play or fire start. Based on the assessment, the fire department helps determine the likelihood of recidivism and can offer fire and life safety instruction for the children and their family. The State Fire Marshal's Office has also established a strong relationship with the State of Iowa Juvenile Court Office to assess youthful offenders in an effort to safeguard the community from future criminal arson activity.



3927 121st St.
Urbandale, IA 50323
fire@urbandale.org

www.facebook.com/urbandalefiredepartment

Juvenile Fire Intervention Program



The Urbandale Fire Department, in conjunction with the State of Iowa Fire Marshal's Office offers a regional program to reduce the number of fire injuries and deaths, by providing evaluation, education, and redirection assistance to children who exhibit fire setting behavior.



Take Responsibility

It starts, almost always, with just a match and a piece of paper; nothing complicated or intricate.

The flame from the match eats its way across to the paper. The paper begins to crackle and curl. It gives off heat, smoke, and light. The glow lights the face of the fire starter. It is an intelligent face; a young face; a child's face. One fire out of four is set by someone, the evidence that survives indicates that 40-70% of those deliberately set fires are set by children: our children.

It is the responsibility of ALL of us to inform and educate the children to the problems associated with fire. Mothers, fathers, teachers, and professional firefighters alike, have the responsibility to teach the children of our community. Do your part to help the children in your life understand what fire is, how it can help and most of all, how it can hurt!



Curiosity or Crime?

Parents instinctively equate fire setting with a criminal act, since fire departments and court systems have always presented it in this manner. There needs to be a more comfortable feeling on the part of parents. Every fire set by a child should not be considered arson. Certainly there are some that are intentional and malicious, which is the traditional definition of arson, but just because you have a child who plays with matches doesn't mean criminal activity has taken place.

How Our Program Works

Our Juvenile Fire Intervention Program is designed to intervene in destructive behavior. The intervention process begins with an initial interview and assessment followed by the planning and implementation of a strategy. The initial interview will be conducted with one of our trained program staff, the child, and the parents. By first identifying the juvenile and assessing the level of fire setting behavior, we can then recommend family fire safety practices, prevention education classes, and/or professional counseling services. The professional counseling services consist of partners across our state. These partners consist of mental health facilities, social workers, family therapists, juvenile authorities, and more who are available to meet your needs.

If you have a child setting fires, please contact:

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| Urbandale Fire Dept. | 515.278.3970 |
| United Way Help Line | 211 |
| United Way Website | 211.org |



This fire in Urbandale was caused by a juvenile playing with matches.