

Juvenile Firesetting

A Local Issue and a
Global Problem

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Society's View on Firesetting

WHY??????

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Percentage of juvenile arrests in CT:

- Vandalism?
- 38%
- Arson?
- 64%
- Why?
- Kids may be put into the system for fire starting where education and/or treatment may be a more appropriate option.
 - Most fire starting incidents are born of normal curiosity.
 - There are more fire starting incidents than firesetting.

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Statistics

- From 2000 – 2006, 64% of arson arrests in CT were *juvenile fire starters and fire setters*.
- Incidents of juvenile firesetting is on the rise across the country.
- Nearly 350 people die each year from juveniles set fires. (USFA)
- \$ 1.2B in property loss annually.

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“FIRESTARTING” (“FIREPLAY”)

The use of fire by a person who has little or no understanding of consequences of fire and without intention to cause harm or damage

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“FIRESETTING”

The use of fire by a person for intentional acts designed to create a disturbance and/or to inflict damage and/or harm

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Myths about Juvenile Firesetting

- A Child can control a small fire
- Firesetting is just a phase
- Some children are obsessed with fire
- If you burn a child’s hand, he/she will stop setting fires

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Signs to look for

- Burnt items found in the home or where they play
- Burnt matches found in unexplained places
- High interest in fire/fire related items or activities
- Unexplained burns on hands/hair
- Missing matches and lighters
 - Hoarding by children

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Curiosity Firestarting (fireplay)

- 3-7 years old
- Almost always a boy
- Fires are usually hidden
- Will panic if fire gets out of control
- Shows remorse

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Elementary school children

- Understand transformations fire can make
- No real fear of fire
 - Experiences with birthday candles
- Can't anticipate events they haven't experienced
- Parents are often fooled
 - Good at following directions
 - Not good at anticipating what might go wrong
- Understand cause and effect
 - Don't always use these abilities

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CRISIS (Firesetting)

- 5-10 years old
- Almost always a boy
- Almost always alone
- Fire generally symbolic to related stress
- General a cry for help

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DELINQUENT (Firesetting)

- 10-16
- Boy or Girl
- Always in a group
- Fires are outdoors
- Away from home
- Vandalism
- Peer pressure

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Pathological (Firesetting)

- 12-18 years old
- Generally a boy
- Fire are away from
- Multiple fire sets 10-100's of fires
- Psychological issues

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What does this mean to you?

- All juvenile set fires need to be addressed.
 - Don't use corporal punishment at the scene.
- All juvenile firestarters/setters must be referred to the local JFS program as quickly as practical.
 - The size of the fire does not matter. Big fires start small.
- Pathological behaviors may need immediate and emergency intake.

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JFS Program Objectives

- Provide the JFS and the family with education and possibly treatment.
- Provide the JFS with a dedicated professional to work through their issues.
- Eliminate the crisis, death and property loss caused by JFS.
- Keep the JFS out of the justice system when possible.

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Identification

- Parents
- Schools
- Fire Service Personnel

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JFS Program

- Step 1- Interview/Information
 - Two JFS Intervention Specialists (JFSIS) conduct an interview and provide information about the program.
 - Usually done in the home
 - Location may be mandated
 - Office space at local FD—Police Station
 - Gather family, fire, education and social history.
 - Assess the need for emergency intake.

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Common interview expectations

- Juvenile
 - Confused & uncertain as to what is going to happen
- Parent
 - Sense of relief to share the burden
- Interviewer
 - Authority—"I'm in charge"

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JFS Program

- Step 2- Screening
 - JFSIS conducts a screening a few days after the interview.
 - Use of a standardized screening tool. (Oregon Screening Tool)
 - Screening tool helps determine level of fire setting behavior.
 - Provides the JFSS with knowledge to development an education plan or referral to a mental health professional.

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JFS Program

- Step 3- Mental Health/Counseling
 - Child may be referred to a mental health professional if necessary.
 - A risk assessment may be done to determine the level of risk.
 - Treatment would be based on the risk assessment score.
 - May require inpatient or outpatient treatment.

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INTERVENTION – EDUCATION

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Preventing child-set fires

- Be committed to preventing fires as fighting fires
- Start Early
- Treat every response/interaction as an opportunity
- Build a relationship with your community
- Use engaging age-appropriate materials
- NO SCARY STORIES

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Fire Safety Education (Firestarting)

- Education
 - Age appropriate fire education.
 - Social skills building.
 - Self-esteem/self-worth building.
 - Demonstrates consequences of firestarting or firesetting.

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MESSAGES

- Do not necessarily teach
- Do not give the behaviors you want them to perform
 - Messages repeat, Don't do this, Don't do that
 - Messages should be positive

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Education “after the fact”

- Punishment alone does not teach a child about fire
- Messages, methods, and materials should be broad-based and age appropriate
- Children need fire safety education
 - Very young through teen years

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Educational Components of a Program

- Four Important Factors
 - Education goals
 - Target group to be served
 - Format of the learning environment
 - Teaching materials employed

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Treatment (Firesetting)

- Usually advanced counseling with mental health professionals.
 - Includes Firestarting/Firesetting education
 - May be done concurrently
 - May be done following inpatient/outpatient treatment.

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JFS Program

- Upon completion of an educational and/or treatment program
 - Follow up visits are conducted at 2, 4 and 6 months.
 - May be a phone call or visit
 - Additional services may be provided.
 - Case will be closed.

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Lessons Learned

- Family Involvement
- Assessment and evaluation
- Fascination
- Parents don't understand
- Each child is different
- Multidisciplinary teamwork

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Documentation of the Problem

How NFIRS can play a role

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NFIRS Fire Codes

- Cause of Ignition
 - 1 Intentional
 - 2 Unintentional
- E2- Factors Contributing to Ignition
 - 19 -- Playing with heat source. Includes playing with matches, candles, and lighters and bringing combustibles into a heat source.

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Human Factors Contributing

- Code 7 -- Age is a contributing factor
 - < 18
- Where do we go from here?
 - Completion of the Arson Module—NFIRS-11

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Arson Module (NFIRS-11)

A REVIEW
(Refer to your handout)

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A - Header Information

A		MM	DD	YY							NFIRS-11	
FD	State	Month	Day	Year	Station	Investigator	Specialist	Charge			Arson	

- Header information is repeated on all modules . . .
 - In an automated system, this information is entered once and imported into all modules

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B - Agency Referred to

- Identifies the agency, if any, the incident was referred to for follow-up investigation

B Agency Referred To		<input type="checkbox"/> None	
Agency name	Street Address	City	Their case number
Agency Phone Number	State	Zip Code	Their ORI
			Their Federal Identifier (FID)
			Their IHD

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C - Case Status

- Identifies the status of the investigation at the time the report was filed

C Case Status	
1 <input type="checkbox"/> Investigation open	4 <input type="checkbox"/> Closed with arrest
2 <input type="checkbox"/> Investigation closed	5 <input type="checkbox"/> Closed with exceptional clearance
3 <input type="checkbox"/> Investigation inactive	

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D - Availability of Material First Ignited

- Identifies the availability of the ignition source (including matches and lighters) to the subject.
- Was the Material
 - Transported to the scene
 - Available at scene
 - Unknown

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E - Suspected Motivation Factors

- Indicates the stimulus factors that caused the subject (s) to burn, or attempt to burn any real or personal property
- Motivational Factors Can Include:
 - Extortion—Labor Unrest—Insurance Fraud
 - Intimidation – Void Contract/lease – Personal – Hate Crime
 - Institutional – Societal – Protest – Civil Unrest
 - Fireplay/Curiosity – Vanity/recognition – Thrills
 - Attention/sympathy – Sexual excitement – Homicide
 - Suicide– Domestic Violence – Burglary Concealment
 - Homicide Concealment – Auto Theft Concealment
 - Destroy records/evidence, Other suspected Motivations

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F - Apparent Group Involvement

- Indicates whether the suspect (s) was motivated to commit the arson act because of involvement in a group or as a means to promote the cause of a group

F	Apparent Involvement
	Check up to three factors
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Terrorist group
2	<input type="checkbox"/> Gang
3	<input type="checkbox"/> Anti-government group
4	<input type="checkbox"/> Outlaw motorcycle organization
5	<input type="checkbox"/> Organized crime
6	<input type="checkbox"/> Racial/ethnic hate group
7	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious hate group
8	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual preference hate group
9	<input type="checkbox"/> Other criminal group
U	<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown

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G₁ - Entry Method

- Indicates how the offender (s) gained access to the property
- Fill in 2-digit code from 11 to UU

G ₁	Entry Method
	<input type="text"/>
	Entry Method

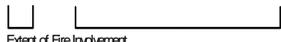
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G₂ - Extent of Fire Involvement on Arrival

- Indicates the fire department's observation of the extent of the fire's involvement upon arrival

G₂ Extent of Fire Involvement on Arrival

Extent of Fire Involvement



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H – Incendiary Devices

- Identifies the components, methods and/or devices that were used in the incident

- Categories are:

- CONTAINER
- IGNITION/DELAY DEVICE
- FUEL



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I - Other Investigative Information

- Identifies other investigative information pertinent to the case



I Other Investigative Information

Check all that apply

- Code violations
- Structure for sale
- Structure vacant
- Other crimes involved
- Illicit drug activity
- Change in insurance
- Financial problem
- Criminal/Civil actions pending

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J - Property Ownership

- Identifies the ownership of the property involved in the arson

J Property Ownership

- Private
- City, town, village, local
- County or parish
- State or province
- Federal
- Foreign
- Military
- Other

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K - Initial Observations

- Identifies important initial observations made at the incident scene

K	Initial Observations
Check all that apply	
1 <input type="checkbox"/> Windows ajar	5 <input type="checkbox"/> Fire department forced entry
2 <input type="checkbox"/> Doors ajar	6 <input type="checkbox"/> Forced entry prior to FD arrival
3 <input type="checkbox"/> Doors locked	7 <input type="checkbox"/> Security system activated
4 <input type="checkbox"/> Doors unlocked	8 <input type="checkbox"/> Security present, didn't activate

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L - Laboratory Used

- Identifies the laboratory, if any, that conducted analysis of evidence
- Laboratory Used Codes:
 1. Local
 2. State
 3. ATF
 4. FBI
 5. Other federal Lab
 6. Private
 7. None



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Section M-Juvenile Firesetter

- Sub-module of the arson module
- Completed for each juvenile <18



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M1 Subject Number

- Unique number that is assigned to each juvenile subject
- Allows tracking of any subject under 18
- Permits analysis and tracking of juvenile Firesetter trends
- Subject number is entered as 3 digits—
 - 001, 002, 003, etc.

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M2 Age or Date of Birth

- Enter subject's age or date of birth, but not both
- Age is in years,
- DOB is MM/DD/YYYY
- Information can be used with other demographic information to identify arson problems.

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M3 Gender

- Identification of the subject as Male or Female
- Information can be used with other demographic information to identify arson problems



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M4 Race

- Identification is based on U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) designations
- Check or mark the appropriate box

- White Black, African/American American Indian Alaska Native
- Asian Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander Other Multiracial
- Undetermined

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M5 Ethnicity

- Ethnicity is an ethnic classification or affiliation
- Designates a population subgroup having a common cultural heritage

- Hispanic or Latino Non Hispanic or Latino

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M6 Family Type

- Defines the nature of the family structure at the time of the incident
- Family Type Codes that are used:
 - Single Parent
 - Foster Parent (s)
 - Two-parent family
 - Extended family
 - No Family Unit
 - Other
 - Unknown



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M7 Motivation/Risk Factors

- Stimulus or risk factors that were present and constituted a possible motivation for the subject (s) to burn, attempt to burn, any real or personal property Motivation/Risk Factor Codes include:
 - Mild Curiosity about fire
 - Moderate Curiosity about fire
 - Extreme Curiosity about fire
 - Diagnosed (or suspected) ADD/ADHD
 - History of trouble outside school
 - History of stealing or shoplifting
 - History of physically assaulting others
 - History of fireplay or firesetting
 - Transiency

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M8 Disposition of Person Under 18

- Describes how the juvenile firesetter was handled at the end of the incident
- Disposition Codes Include—
 - Handled within the department
 - Released to parent or guardian
 - Referred to other authority
 - Referred to treatment/counseling program
 - Arrested, charged as an adult
 - Referred to firesetter intervention program

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**Juvenile Firesetting is
NOT a fire problem--
It is a KID problem...**

Summary

Where do we go from here?

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Summary

- Identify all juvenile fire setters
- Refer all juvenile fire setters to the local program
- Don't take matters into you own hands
 - Scolding, threatening, or promising harsher punishment if happens again.....
- Partner with the local program
- Be part of the JFS solution
- Work together to stop JFS behavior

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What Next?

- Explore ways to build a program
- Look to partner with surrounding communities to have a regional program.
- Ensure that the FD and PD understand that all JFS firestarting/setting incidents need intervention.
- A state committee is working on developing resources to assist in getting programs up and running.

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Questions?

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