



play safe! be safe!®



BULLETIN



Safe Kids Aid Juvenile Fire Safety Initiatives

Safe Kids USA, a nationwide network of more than 600 coalitions and chapters, is at the forefront of educational efforts to prevent unintentional childhood injury for children one to 14. Safe Kids also plays an important role in co-sponsoring *play safe! be safe!*® workshops and broadening the reach of the program.

Susan Helms, Director of Injury Prevention & Safe Kids Mid-South at the Le Bonheur Children's Medical Center, Memphis, Tenn., is an excellent example of the role Safe Kids chapters play in juvenile fire-safety education. Helms organized a Community and Train-the-Trainer *play safe! be safe!* workshop at the end of 2009 attended by more than 80 educators, including early childhood teachers, program managers, center-based providers, as well as fire and health care professionals.

"We are always seeking age-specific and interactive programs like *play safe! be safe!* in all the risk areas," Helms explains. "These types of programs help children understand dangers and what they need to protect themselves and prevent injuries." Equally important in the Safe Kids initiatives is "always sending something home."

Helms observes, "So often we encounter parents who feel accidents happen to other people's children, not theirs. It's why our educational efforts extend to the community."



Led By



Safe Kids Aid Juvenile Fire Safety Initiatives (continued)

Helms meets regularly with parent groups such as PTAs, emphasizing safety education. She also reaches out to ladies clubs and junior auxiliaries. She explains: "These groups work in smaller community settings but are a tremendous help in sharing educational information. They also have an added incentive because they receive recognition awards for their good works from their national organizations." When she receives individual calls for assistance from parents or teachers, she is able to refer them to the Safe Kids Resource & Safety Center for helpful books and materials

Tracy Rouse, who heads the Safe Kids Omaha, Neb. Chapter based at the Children's Hospital & Medical Center, was a key facilitator in bringing *play safe! be safe!* kits to this city of more than 400,000. She explains, "We have many community partners including the Omaha Fire Department. At the beginning of January, there was a fire in which two children were killed and several other family members were seriously injured. Unfortunately, the children had been playing with a lighter or some sort of ignition source, which led to this fatal fire.

"As the coordinator for the Safe Kids Chapter, I was aware that Safe Kids Worldwide offered a Rapid Response Fire Grant for communities who experience a fire in which children die, so that education may be administered immediately. I called my contact, Capt. David Mann, Public Education/Recruiting Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist with the Omaha Fire Department to see if this would be helpful to them. His immediate response was, 'YES' and before I could even ask anything else, he said, 'buy me more *play safe! be safe!* kits.'"

Rouse was familiar with the *play safe! be safe!* program because several years earlier she was invited by the Midwest Childcare Association to help plan a *play safe! be safe!* Train-the-Trainer workshop. It was held at Children's Hospital & Medical Center and approximately 70 educators attended. With the *play safe! be safe!* kits she received, she contacted Capt. Mann. Mann initially used the kits to help fire inspectors overseeing daycare centers to build rapport between his department and the providers.

Mann comments, "I cannot tell you how happy I am to have friends like Tracy. She was wise and kind enough to think of me when she heard about the tragic fire in which two small children were killed earlier this year. As she mentioned, the kits are being used by our Fire Inspectors, but they are also being taken to other daycares every day.

"Our department coordinates a Juvenile Firesetter Intervention program," continues Mann. "This program educates fire starters and children who show interest in fire setting. We show them why they should not play with fire. We keep zip code records of where these young children live and many of them are as young as three years old. These records allow us to take the *play safe! be safe!* kits to daycares in these neighborhoods. Our city has literally thousands of daycares. Many of them have no real 'curriculum' to teach from. With these kits, now they do!"

Mann presently has one staff member, Ed DeVance, assisting him. Vance gave out at least 15 kits in the weeks following the fire, and they are down to their last three or four until the shipment arrives from Safe Kids.

Safe Kids Aid Juvenile Fire Safety Initiatives (continued)

Mann articulated a growing concern among many public service agencies: budget cuts. "Our Fire Department has been asked to cut back on all programs, yet this need is obviously not going away. Our Public Education Bureau has little or no budget for 2010. We need to get all of our support from folks like Tracy and the grant that she so graciously submitted on our behalf."

Marshalling resources is a talent that Mann has honed. Despite cutbacks, the department recently acquired the services of a volunteer interpreter to assist the department in reaching out to Omaha's growing Hispanic population. "We will be conducting 'Fire Safety In The Home' classes," explains Mann. The play safe! be safe! kits will be used for our younger classes. I don't have to tell you that the kit is a vital tool in teaching children that, "Fire is a Tool NOT a Toy."



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Fire Apparatus Engineer Ed DeVance has 17 Years of service on the Omaha Fire Department. While receiving therapy to recover from a back injury, FAE DeVance has been assigned to the Public Education Bureau. He's currently presenting the play safe! safe! program and kits to daycare centers in areas of Omaha where statistics show the most Juvenile Firesetter activity. He enjoys the opportunity to "stop the fires before they start," but is looking forward to returning to his duty as the driver of Engine 22.

Ask Dr. Cole

In previous columns, I reviewed the first two modules of "After the Fire: The Teachable Moment," a program developed by the Prevention 1st Foundation. We began with strategies for helping children process the trauma of a fire. Next we focused on fire survival and what specific actions children can take if a fire happens in their home. The final module emphasizes Fire Prevention and involves children and their families.

Everything in this module is directed to lessening children's anxiety by giving them specific answers to "what can we do so this won't happen to us." In addition to classroom reading and discussion, three take home activities and checklists are provided.

Again, repetition is critical in teaching younger children fire safety guidelines. Show the class the *play safe! be safe!*® story cards from lesson four, reinforcing "matches and lighters are adult tools" and "tell a grownup," etc. By asking the questions on the back of the cards, you engage the children and encourage them to talk about their experiences.

Safe Kids Aid Juvenile Fire Safety Initiatives (continued)

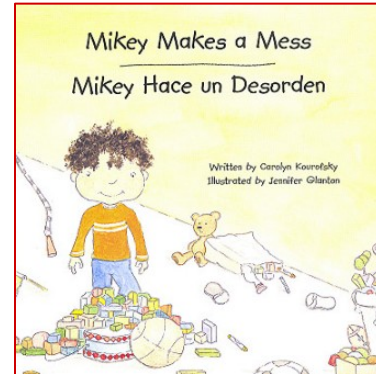
Mikey Makes a Mess by Carolyn Kourofsky and *Safety Around the Fire* by Lucia Raatma are important books to reread to the class. Ask the children specific questions about Mikey's activities: What did he find? What did Mikey's dad learn? What should you do if you find matches or lighters?

For ages 9-11, finish reading, *Fire! My Parents Story* by Jessie Haas, which is an excellent reading resource to encourage discussion about fire preparedness.

Take-home activities and materials include:

- Count the smoke alarms in your home and ask Mom or Dad to test the smoke alarms.
- Home Fire Safety Checklist.
- Plan your escape and how you would get out of your house if there was a fire.

Module three is critical to the success of this fire prevention program. It reinforces key fire safety points for the children and engages parents, reminding them about the importance of maintaining working smoke detectors. In addition, it establishes the protocol to follow in the event of a fire.



News Update: Novelty Lighters

While legislation banning the sale of novelty lighters has been stalled in the U.S. Congress, several states recently introduced laws to ban the sale of these toy-like lighters. The Mississippi House and Senate passed a novelty lighter bill. It will now be sent to the governor. The Kansas Senate approved a bill, which will now be sent to the Kansas House. Maryland also has introduced legislation, and novelty lighter legislation has been reintroduced in Georgia and Illinois. States that have passed legislation include: Arkansas, Louisiana, Maine, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington.

Last year the United States Fire Administration (USFA) joined with other national fire organizations in their support to ban the sale and distribution of novelty and toy-like 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. USFA has a helpful map that highlights the status of legislation in the U.S.

Check it out: http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/all_citizens/home_fire_prev/noveltylighters/