



play safe! be safe!®



B U L L E T I N



play safe! be safe!® Hits 50!

It's official. With the completion of the Omaha, Nebraska workshop last fall, the *play safe! be safe!* program has now been presented at least once in all 50 states. "The Omaha child-care community collaborated to make this workshop one of the most successful ever," comments Dr. Robert Cole, who taught the train-the-trainer workshop.

"BIC is committed to bringing its fire safety message to as many communities as possible," said Linda Kwong, director of Corporate Communications for BIC Corporation. "Each state has posed its own set of unique circumstances, from Alaska's isolated communities to New York's inner-city challenges. What has been universal is the positive response that we have received from daycare professionals and fire safety educators to our *play safe! be safe!* workshop and kit."

Denver Firefighters Museum: Kids Clamor for More

Angela Rayne joined the Denver Firefighters Museum as Executive Director in 2004, and that's when things started to change. With a Master's Degree in museum studies, she had ideas about how to enhance this once-traditional fire museum by adding interactive games and play areas to better accomplish the museum's community education mandate. The result is that the 11,000-sq. ft. museum now boasts a membership base of 1,200 and growing.

Rayne's basic concept was to create a kids' exhibit gallery in which everything was "touchable" and every area reinforced fire safety messages. "I'm a big proponent of the *play safe! be safe!*® program," comments Rayne, "so I adapted parts of the kit, along with those from other fire safety programs, to design a truly interactive environment. I feel it is critical to a child's learning process to engage them in fire safety activities, as well as to share the history of Denver's fire service."

Among the ideas she has adapted is to take the concept of the *play safe! be safe! Keep Away!*® card game and make it into a floor game of hop scotch. Rayne explains, "We've painted various items—some are safe, others are dangerous—onto interlocking rubber squares. The children are given smiley faces and stop signs. As they land on various items on the mat, they have to decide whether it's Safe for Play! or Keep Away!"



Rayne has set up the *Keep Away!* memory card game at a desk with chairs. Other *play safe! be safe!* activity cards are integrated into what she refers to as the "community rug." Rayne adds, "This is the area where the kids come and sit and we discuss community helpers such as firefighters, doctors, teachers, and others. After we talk about firefighters, the kids get to dress in typical fire gear." Other *play safe! be safe!* activity cards are used at the stop! drop! and roll! mat.



One of the children's favorite areas is a 12' by 12' "house," which was designed and built by volunteers for the museum. Intended to provide children with a better understanding of escape plans, it's divided into four rooms and has hallways and windows. While the sides are only 2' tall, it simulates a house environment and is just perfect for the kids to crawl around in.

Rayne surprised many veteran fire educators when she started "Wee Wednesdays" for two- and three-year-olds. It has become one of the museum's most successful programs. "It's more like a play date for toddlers," says Rayne. "The program runs for six weeks and we hold class one hour before the museum opens," she explains. Over the course of the class, she uses the *play safe! be safe!* video and other kit components. "The kids grasped the fire safety concepts amazingly well," points out Rayne, "and we now offer Wee classes four times a year."

"What's most gratifying," concludes Rayne, "is watching how the parents expect to stay for a brief time and wind up staying much longer. We are engaging them through their children's activities and empowering them to continue these important lessons at home."

Ask Dr. Cole

Finding time to integrate fire safety lessons into their curriculum is so daunting to some educators that they either do nothing or opt to give it a cursory review during Fire Prevention Week. We cannot expect a three- to five-year old to remember basic fire safety rules if they are revisited only once a year. These lessons must be taught over multiple days and reintroduced throughout the year.

What I stress in the *play safe! be safe!*® workshop is that the kit enables teachers to combine developmental skills and fire safety education into their lessons. *play safe! be safe!* is a language arts program that just happens to address fire safety. Every kit component supports the development of language and literacy skills. For example, the video and the *Keep Away!*® card game support vocabulary development, the discussion cards promote the ability to understand and tell stories, and the activity boards promote the formation and explanation of categories.

The *play safe! be safe!* kit is more than a curriculum guideline. It's a self-contained, ready-to-use classroom program. Nothing has to be cut out because educators are meeting their language arts mandate. Plus, the teacher's manual offers additional resources.

While I talk about the *play safe! be safe!* kit, it's not until people actually open one that they grasp what I'm saying. It's a class lesson "right out of a box!" The recent Omaha workshop is a good case in point. Once participants saw the kit, it was an enormous draw.

Toy-Like Lighter Update

Two-year-old Breydon Edwards and his 15-month-old brother, Peyton, were playing on their bed with a toy-like lighter shaped like a motorcycle. When they lifted the front tire, a flame shot out catching their bed on fire and trapping them. Their unfortunate deaths have raised awareness of the dangers of toy-like lighters, also referred to as novelty lighters, and galvanized the Arkansas fire community to take action to ban these lighters. Since the incident, several towns have passed ordinances banning the sale of these lighters. The Pine Bluff City Council used the following verbiage to define these items: "...a lighter that has entertaining audio or visual effects, or that depicts or resembles in physical form or function articles commonly recognized as appealing to or intended for use by children 10 years of age or younger."

The Bulletin contacted Judith Okulitch, assistant manager, Community Education and State Coordinator, Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program for the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal, who has been at the forefront of educating people and collecting data on the dangers of toy-like lighters.

Toy-Like Lighter Update (continued)

"It's so unfortunate that it takes incidents like the death of the two young boys in Arkansas to move discussion and action on this issue," comments Okulitch. "What's gratifying is that more and more fire departments around the country are discussing toy-like lighters in the media, and local governments are taking action. We invite Bulletin readers to read our most recent issue of "Hot Issues" for a more extensive update." Use this URL:

http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/docs/Comm_Ed/Hot_Issues/Hi_winter_07.pdf

Thanks to the Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association, Okulitch's office has a new "tool" at its disposal to raise consumer awareness about toy-like lighters. It's a mobile billboard, which features pictures of lighters and the headline: Toy-like lighters are unsafe in a child's hands. "The billboard is eye-catching and really gets attention," says Okulitch. "Our biggest challenge is driving it around the state!"

