



WINTER 2007

play safe! be safe!®

BULLETIN



Ask Dr. Cole

Why don't we do what we know is best for us?

We all are guilty of it: We know we should do something but we don't do it. For injury prevention educators and health professionals, it's a dilemma we grapple with constantly. Why don't people install smoke detectors? Why aren't parents more conscientious about hiding matches and lighters from their children? In our *play safe! be safe!* train-the-trainer workshops we work to help daycare providers and fire prevention educators understand and then overcome the barriers that prevent people from following through. We have adopted a multi-step process called the **Health Belief Model (HBM)**.

The Health Belief Model has been in use for well over three decades. It provides a framework to help us understand and promote preventive health and safety behavior. In the context of our training, it helps identify all of the points that must be considered if we are to motivate teachers and parents to implement fire safety education and practice it in their classrooms and homes.

In future Bulletins, I will discuss each HBM step in depth, including:

Susceptibility & Severity— we'll explore why children and adults do not feel vulnerable to the consequences of fire, even when national statistics overwhelmingly show the benefits of fire prevention steps.

Benefits & Barriers—will take a look at the positive steps we can take to overcome barriers.

Cues to Action—provides reminders to teachers and parents to keep fire safety foremost in their minds.

Self-Efficacy & Self-Motivation—critical to the HBM process, though not part of the original model, is where we will discuss obstacles preventing children and adults from embracing fire safety principles.

Social Norms—this will be the final step discussed in the process, though again not originally part of the HBM.

**Fireproof Children/Prevention First:
Department of Homeland Security “Success” Story**

Fireproof Children/Prevention First has been selected as a Department of Homeland Security “success story” and is highlighted on the Department’s website (<http://www.firegrantsupport.com/fps/stories/>). Fireproof Children/Prevention First, headed by Dr. Robert Cole, received a 2004 Fire Prevention and Safety grant to expand the reach of its preschool children and families program. The framework for the program is the award-winning *play safe! be safe!*® multi-media classroom kit.

Working Magic with *play safe! be safe!*®



Jack Durjan has the magic touch when it comes to teaching fire safety...literally. Durjan is a firefighter with Martin County Fire Rescue in Florida, works with the American Red Cross, teaches fire safety to all ages, and...is a professional magician!

Durjan, who has a business teaching magic, has incorporated the BIC *play safe! be safe!* program into his fire safety seminars for the past 8-9 years, and is on his third kit, having worn out two *play safe! be safe!* kits in the process. “I’ve been doing public education for the past 13 years,” he says, “and when I came across the *play safe! be safe!* kit, it was like finding GOLD. It was a new tool for me to work (play) with!” Play is the operative word, since involving young children in a fun activity is a great learning tool.

After attending a BIC *play safe! be safe!*® workshop, he quickly incorporated the *play safe! be safe!* Keep Away card game and lessons into his “magical” fire safety presentations, which have also included Smokey® Bear and wildlife cards. His programs usually include 8 or 9 magic tricks that appeal to all ages.

One trick, using the magician’s “card forcing” method, has the student pick a card. With his “mind-reading” magic, Durjan tells the student he/she picked a very good card on fire prevention, and tells him/her which card they picked. Then they discuss the topic on the card. Another variation is to have children pick a card and then Durjan calls the teacher or “Master Wizard” on the cell phone and that person tells the student which card they chose, to their amazement, which leads into the topic of the card.

His “magic book,” is a collapsible storybook he constructed himself. After reading a special safety story on the inside (that only covers about 3 pages), he holds specially marked corners and drops the book, exposing the message “play safe, be safe” on blocks of pages.

“Magic is all done by misconception and deception,” he explains, “and many of these tricks are detailed in various Internet web sites for anyone to learn.”

Working magic with special needs kids

Durjan uses magic tricks and hands-on participation in his programs for special needs children. His dress depends on what the teachers want: Durjan may wear a firefighter's uniform or dress in bright yellow pants, a tuxedo-print t-shirt and clown wig. Keeping the program down to 20 minutes is essential, and knowing your audience's capabilities is important. He starts out by saying, "I'm going to teach you how to save a life with one finger!" As they are instructed to hold up one finger, he reveals the secret: dial 911. Simple? Yes. But it's the mystery of the presentation that makes them remember it and proudly recite the "trick question" to friends and family.

"Kids love to participate, and love the fun of magic tricks, which they are eager to show their parents (and teach the lesson) when they go home," he says. He also buys little "rewards" for the kids to pull out of the magic hat or purse at the end of the presentation, such as little toys, lollipops, a fire truck eraser or fire hydrant eraser.

Jack Durjan is retiring as a professional firefighter this spring, but he'll be teaching courses on educating the public on fire safety at the Academy of Fire Science in Montour Falls, NY in May, and doing more programs through his local American Red Cross Chapter in Florida. He will continue his work teaching fire and life safety through his own company, A.C.C.E.S.S. Consulting, and teaching aspiring magicians as well. He can be reached at magicjack46@yahoo.com.

'Tis the Season: Turning Up the Heat

Every season offers opportunities, or as Dr. Cole refers to them, cues, to have a fire safety discussion with children. For instance, the winter months are an excellent time to engage them in a discussion of different sources of burns. Stoves and fireplaces are frequent topics, but space heaters are often overlooked. Widely used in certain areas of the country, they result in 25,000 residential fires every year and 6,000 burn injuries in non-fire situations, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).



For children, of course, the main point to stress is: **keep away!** Do not touch.

According to the CPSC here are some of the key points to stress in a space heater discussion with adults:

- Keep heaters at least 3 feet from flammable materials such as draperies
- Place on a flat, hard surface
- Turn off heaters before you go to bed or leave the house
- Inspect and keep them clean