

5th Grade: Youth Firesetting and Wildland Fires

Your youngster learned a very serious lesson today.

First we reviewed the three sides of the fire triangle, including the need for Oxygen, heat, and fuel to even have a fire start. Obviously, if you take one source of the fire away, the fire will not survive. Unfortunately, the level of oxygen a fire needs to burn is generally the same as we need to live, so that doesn't work well in the long run. The other two fire requirements are much the same.

The next part of the program was a video on a fire that was set by three boys, ages nine to eleven (???).

Following are some notes about the fire (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7nprYdLM9E>):

- The fire was accidental in that although the boys were playing with fire and setting off firecrackers.
- However, they did not realize how quickly the fire would grow and that they had so little control over where it went. This is an example of 'reckless burning.'
- The fire ended up totally destroying four houses, seriously damaged a fifth, and gave a man who lived across the street from the burning houses third degree burns.
- Three of the houses were fully involved in less than six minutes.
- It only took six and one-half minutes for the first fire engine to arrive, which is a very good time. It will take that amount of time for the Rapid City Fire Department to get an engine to most of the houses in the city, particularly those on the outer limits.

A few points of discussion during the video were:

- In South Dakota, youth of age ten or over can be cited for illegal actions for reckless burning.
- Even if you don't mean to start a fire that hurts someone, destroys property, or gets bigger than you intended, it is illegal.
- Even if you are not the one who started the fire, but you were present and part of the actions, you are guilty of reckless burning.

There are several web sites that address youth firesetting. Just a few of them are listed below:

- <http://www.nfpa.org/public-education/by-topic/wildfire/information-for-youth-and-families/youth-oriented-websites>
- <http://www.nfpa.org/news-and-research/fire-statistics-and-reports/fire-statistics/fire-causes/arson-and-juvenile-firesetting/children-playing-with-fire>
- https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_332b.pdf
- <http://www.communityhealthstrategies.com/counseling-children-whoplay-with-fire/>
- <https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/dept/files/community-development/fire/YFSbrochure.pdf>

There are several other sites that deal specifically with youth-set wildland fires, especially the Tennessee fire in 2016:

- <http://www.nfpa.org/public-education/campaigns/takeaction/wildfire-virtual-field-trips>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4H2nRto0Ok>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ru0s3uJ2oZ4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZr3CPCe8BI>

Thank you for allowing us to give your youngster this valuable information.