

## **YOUTH FIRESETTER PROGRAM**

As part of our commitment to providing quality safety programs to the community, the public education department applied for and received a Fire Safety and Prevention grant in 2010. This grant allowed us the ability to implement a juvenile firesetter intervention program. The grant provided for the training of eight fire department personnel and helped to cover costs of starting the program.

### **About the Program**

The Buckeye Fire Department's Youth Firesetter Program has taken a positive approach in its efforts to stop youth firesetting. A goal to stop firesetting in our community by youths has been established. Assistance and support to the community is being offered. This will be accomplished by fire personnel trained to the NFPA 1035 standard.

The Buckeye Fire Department strives to offer educational programs to its residents with the sole purpose of making our community a safer place. As a result of this continued service to our community, we have become aware of a need for youth firesetter educational classes. These classes will be provided to the parents of young firesetters who reside within the City of Buckeye. Our goal is to decrease the number of youth firesetting incidents. Requests for these services can be made by the parents or legal guardian of the child, referral by a fire investigator, school, or by Juvenile Justice (court mandate).

When an incident has occurred, interviews will be conducted to determine whether the firesetting behavior was accidental, curiosity or symptomatic of deeper problems. Educational intervention will be utilized for all firesetters. When firesetting behavior is determined to be indicative of more serious problems, referral to specialized social service agencies will be recommended.

### **What is involved in the program?**

#### **Identification**

Identifying juveniles who demonstrate firesetting behaviors is an extremely important part in which our entire community can become involved in. This may be accomplished in a variety of way. Juveniles who have been linked to a fire incident through an investigation may be referred to the program by a fire investigator and/or the Juvenile Court. Youth demonstrating firesetting behavior can be discovered and recommended by parents or legal guardians, or referrals may come from school officials, and health counselors.

#### **Education**

Educating youth is the most important aspect of the program and as such an educational component will be provided for all youth that are involved in a firesetting incident. Education involves providing the family with the information they need to prevent future mishaps with fire. This component is designed to educate not only the child involved but the entire family. Parents must be as much a part of the process as the child, since we cannot expect the child to use fire in an appropriate manner, when his/her primary role model (parents) may be

demonstrating the incorrect method several times a day. The parents may need as much or more education than the child.

Education should not always begin after an incident has occurred. Recognizing this, we strive to implement fire education in to our elementary schools as well as preschools. This education will be provided a minimum of twice per year.

Many firesetters know how to stop, drop and roll, crawl low under smoke, feel the door, test their smoke alarm, make an escape plan, and many other survival skills. But survival skills emphasize what to do after a fire has occurred. Firesetter intervention should emphasize how to avoid the inappropriate use of fire to prevent an incident from every occurring.

**As part of our educational component, the Buckeye Fire Department has given pre-elementary school facilities Play Safe! Be Safe! kits to use in their current curriculum. This kit is produced and purchased from the BIC Corporation, and contains DVDs and other activities that can be used to educated children about fire safety. For more information on these kits you may visit [www.playsafebesafe.com](http://www.playsafebesafe.com).**

### **How to make a Referral**

- Step 1:** **If the fire has not been completely extinguished, contact 9-1-1 immediately!**
- Step 2:** Contact your local fire department as soon after the incident as possible. There are various way in which you can report a case of juvenile firesetting to your local Fire Department. The most important thing to remember is to have the following information available. Have the child's biographical information available including the child's name, parent/guardian name, address and telephone number, child's age and birthdate, what was used to start the fire, when and where the fire took place, how much damage occurred due to the fire and if there were any injuries.
- Step 3:** If no prosecution is desired, a referral to your local fire department's youth firesetter intervention program is recommended. Through the program the child will receive fire safety education, information on the legal consequences of firesetting, how firesetting impacts the community and how to make better choices regarding the use of fire. Further services or counseling may be recommended during the program.

If you would like to make a referral or request additional information regarding the program, please submit the online [Services & Events Request Form](#).