

# Playing with Fire

Over half of all known incendiary or intentional fires in Ontario are motivated by mischief and vandalism; of these fires, the majority are started by children. Children are responsible for roughly 80 wildfires that occur across the province each year, based on a 20-year average.

Children who set fires are often referred to as “child fire starters” and while the intention behind the flame may differ, children who set fires typically do so for one of three reasons:

- **Angry or upset over something or someone.** A child may set fire because they cannot express their pent up emotion.
- **Curiosity.** A child may want to see what will happen when he or she sets fire to an item. There are usually no cruel intentions involved.
- **Destructive.** A child may find pleasure in destroying items or property with fire.

There are a number of ways to help lower the risk of these fires. You can begin by looking for warning signs that indicate a child may start a fire. Parents should be watchful of:

- Fire play (playing with matches, lighters, fire, electrical appliances, burning items or setting fire)
- Missing matches or lighters
- Matches or lighters found among your child’s belongings
- Burn marks on household items or on your child’s belongings
- Child has an extreme interest in fire.

If it is your child who starts a fire, you are responsible for the costs of suppression and damages.



You don’t have to sit back and wait for the worst to happen; there are additional precautions you can take:

- Educate children on fire safety
- Model safe and appropriate fire behaviour
- Get rid of any unnecessary lighters and matches
- Lock up all necessary lighters and matches
- Install and test fire alarms
- Create a home fire escape plan
- Do not leave your child near fire unsupervised.

By practising fire safety and providing fire safety education to your child, you can help reduce the risk of fire setting among children and adolescents, as well as the number of wildfires in Ontario.

For more information, visit: [tapp-c.ca](http://tapp-c.ca)

**To report a wildfire in northern Ontario, call 310-FIRE (3473).**

[ontario.ca/fireprevention](http://ontario.ca/fireprevention)