

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## Two child deaths and a \$1.5 m damage bill prompts MFS warning

Thursday, 8 September 2011

The Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) has re-issued a strong warning to parents after a series of fires involving child curiosity which has led to two deaths and left a \$1.5 million damage bill.

Since July last year, MFS firefighters and Country Fire Service (CFS) volunteers have responded to 13 significant fires linked to children playing with matches and lighters in South Australia.

The latest fire occurred at Elizabeth Vale last night, leaving a damage bill of \$300,000. Working smoke alarms helped a mother and young child escape without injury.

MFS District Officer of Community Safety, Allan Foster said, the message to parents, guardians and anyone who looks after children, is simple.

“Keep matches, lighters and fire starters well out of the reach of children. Store them above adult shoulder height and out of sight.

“Teach children that they must never touch or play with matches and lighters, and encourage them to tell an adult if they see them lying around,” Mr Foster said.

District Officer Foster said firefighters do not want to see injuries or fatalities caused by children playing with fire.

“With 13 fires in 14 months, the warning signs are there. I urge all parents and guardians to immediately ensure that lighters and matches are out of the reach of children, and to continue to be vigilant on this,” Mr Foster said.

The MFS provides a special **Juvenile Firelighters Intervention Program (JFLIP)** to assist families in addressing problems of children being curious about or playing with fire.

Parents or guardians who are concerned about their child’s or children’s interest or activity with fire should ring the MFS on 1300 737 637 to enquire about the program (during business hours).

**JFLIP** is delivered by operational MFS firefighters who have been specially trained to work with children. **The program is free and completely confidential.**

The MFS recommends the following safety tips for parents, carers, friends and relatives who may look after children:

- **Keep matches, lighters and fire starters well out of reach of children.** Storage above adult shoulder height and out of sight is recommended.
- Teach young children that they must never touch matches and lighters. They must notify an adult if they see them lying around.
- Wherever possible avoid using candles if you have young children. Torches and battery powered fake candles are recommended as a safer option.
- If you have to use candles, keep candles up high, out of reach of children. Never leave a child in a room with a candle burning. A child should not sleep in a room with a lit candle.
- Ensure your family has a Home Fire Escape Plan. Practise the plan to ensure everyone understands what to do in the event of a fire.

The MFS urges families to combine the above safety tips with interconnected, photo-electric smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old.

**For media enquiries and interviews call the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770**

**Further information for the public:**

Call the MFS Community Education Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours.  
Country callers 1300 737 637.

[www.mfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.mfs.sa.gov.au)