

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## School holiday child fire and life safety

Friday, 25 September 2015

With the school holidays starting today, the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) issues a reminder to parents and caregivers to ensure matches and lighters are always kept well out of the reach of children.

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Greg Howard said the possibility of children experimenting with lighting fires or putting their life at risk in other ways increases during school holidays when children have so much more free time.

“Every year firefighters respond to significant fires caused by curious children who’ve found lighters or matches lying around the home. A young child started a fire in a bedroom earlier this week with a lighter he found. Fortunately the smoke alarm alerted the parent who acted quickly to shut the bedroom door, evacuate the home and call triple zero, thereby minimising damage to the Morphett Vale home and preventing a tragedy from occurring.

“Whilst it’s not always possible for parents or caregivers to supervise children every single moment, the MFS asks parents to increase supervision over the holidays, plan structured activities for the children and ensure that matches, lighters and fire starters are kept well out of reach. Storage above adult shoulder height and out of sight is recommended – and could prevent tragic fires starting,” Commander Howard said.

The **Juvenile Firefighters Intervention Program (JFLIP)** is provided by the MFS to assist families in addressing the problem of children and young people playing with fire.

Parents or caregivers with concerns about a child who has been lighting fires can ring the MFS on 1300 737 637 to enquire about the program (during business hours).

**JFLIP** is delivered by MFS firefighters who have been specially trained to work with children. **The program is free and completely confidential** and has been running successfully in SA for around 20 years.

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. Praise your children when they do so.
- Wherever possible avoid using candles if you have young children. Torches and battery powered artificial candles are recommended as a safer option.
- If you must use candles, keep them up high, out of reach of children or flammable materials. Never leave children or pets unattended 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 with the children to ensure everyone understands what to do in the event of a fire.

The MFS strongly urges families to combine the above safety tips with hard-wired, interconnected, photo-electric smoke alarms that are well maintained and 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 Safety and Resilience Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours.  
Country callers 1300 737 637.

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