

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Second child fire tragedy a warning to parents

Tuesday, 26 July 2011

A child playing with matches is believed to have caused a tragic house fire at Port Pirie in South Australia's mid north today, prompting a state-wide safety warning.

At 7.30 this morning, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) crews, supported by Country Fire Service (CFS) volunteers, responded to a report of a house fire.

On arrival, they found a child with severe burns and the rear bedroom of the home on fire. Firefighters and ambulance personnel treated the child at the scene before the child was transported to hospital.

Investigators believe the fire was caused by a child playing with matches. A parent was alerted to the fire by a smoke alarm.

MFS Fire Cause Investigator, Shaun Ruxton said it is the **second** tragedy involving a child playing with fire in South Australia in less than a year.

"In December 2010, MFS crews responded to a fire in the state's South-East linked to children playing with fire in a car. A young child perished in that blaze."

The MFS reminds all parents and guardians to keep matches, lighters and fire starters well out of the reach of children.

"We also recommend that families have **interconnected smoke alarms** fitted in all sleeping areas, living rooms and passageways, to give everyone the earliest possible warning of a fire," District Officer Ruxton said.

The MFS provides a special **Juvenile Firefighters Intervention Program (JFLIP)** to assist families in addressing the problem of children 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. Praise your children when they do so.
- 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