



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

John J. Barthelmes, Commissioner

Division of Fire Safety

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL

J. William Degnan, State Fire Marshal

Office: NH Incident Management Center 110 Smokey Bear Blvd., Concord, NH

Mailing Address: 33 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03305

603-223-4289, FAX 603-223-4294

TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964 ARSON HOTLINE 1-800-400-3526



Informational Bulletin 2009-1

February 12, 2009

Fires in Schools must be reported

There is a growing concern that only a small percentage of fire incidents in schools are reported to local fire departments. Incomplete fire reporting means we have an inaccurate picture of the school fire problem. It is essential that teachers, principals, and administrators establish a partnership with local fire/police officials to ensure the safety of the students and staff and the protection of school property.

The State Fire Code (Saf-C 6000) requires that upon the discovery of any fire immediate notification of the local fire department is required. Additionally, as required under the *Safe School Zone* provisions, (RSA 193-D) any set fires shall be immediately reported to local law enforcement and followed up with a written report within 48 hours.

Reporting Fires:

- ✓ All fires must be reported immediately upon discovery. In just 30 seconds, a fire doubles in size, and within minutes can threaten an entire school.
- ✓ Every fire, regardless of its size or location is significant. Report all fires, whether extinguished or still burning. These fires must be investigated by the fire department.
- ✓ Every time a fire occurs or is discovered, staff should preserve the fire scene immediately until the local fire department and/or police department can investigate the incident.
- ✓ Early notification is critical. Prompt and complete reporting assists in identifying youth using fire in an inappropriate and unsafe way. Youth involved with fire once, are five times more likely to use fire inappropriately again unless there is professional intervention.

Risk Factors/Accountability:

- ✓ Youth start fires for many reasons. The size of the fire does not reflect the motive of the youth who started the fire. No matter what the reason, intervention is needed to correct the behavior. Some risk factors are: being influenced by peers, showing off, acting impulsively, lacking the ability to concentrate, having a history of abuse, recent crisis, behavior or academic problems, etc.
- ✓ Youth who use fire at school or on school grounds threaten the safety of other students and school staff. They need to be held accountable for their actions. Starting a fire on school property is a criminal act. Regardless of whether charges are filled, all fires need to be taken seriously.

Intervention:

- ✓ Early identification of a fire and its ignition source can lead to successful intervention strategies for youth that set fires. Intervention may include: addressing curiosity through education; interview and screening to determine appropriate intervention; referrals to mental health providers, requiring youth to participate in juvenile diversion, restitution programs, or community service projects.
- ✓ Firesetting is arson if one knowingly starts a fire or causes an explosion which unlawfully damages the property of another. A criminal investigation should be conducted by law enforcement. Firesetting carries serious consequences which include arrest, trial, conviction, restitution and possibly incarceration.

For more information on school fire safety or youth firesetter issues contact your local fire department or the State Fire Marshal's Office.

Report School Fires – Every Fire, Every Time, Any Size, Any Where...