March NHFIRS Bulletin
Volume 10, 2010

Novelty Lighters

Often mistaken for toys these products prove to be deadly. For decades we have taught our children that lighters are tools not toys. Yet we allow these items to be on our markets shelves for purchase and display. Some of the items are so animated it is nearly impossible for an adult to distinguish, let alone a child. Miniature cars, cell phones, doll accessories, fishing lures, markers, crayons, animals, such as the rubber duck bath toy that even quacks! Tools have become a novelty lighter item as well, a tape measure, hammers, drills and paint brushes. There are even fire trucks, fire extinguishers and a Dalmatian wearing a fire helmet. Unfortunately, these items are what contribute to child death and injuries. In Russellville, Arkansas a 2 year old and a 15 month old died after setting fire to their apartment with a motorcycle-shaped lighter. In North Carolina, a 6 year old boy sustained second-degree burns after playing with a lighter that looked like a toy cell phone.
In Maryland, playground equipment was set on fire by three 5 year old girls using a gun shaped lighter.
In Livermore, Maine a 6 year old at a grocery store with his mother picked up a 'toy' bat and flicked the switch, thinking it was a flashlight. The result was a singed eyebrow and burns to part of his face.
In Oregon, a 6 year old playing with a dolphin shaped lighter started a fire, one child died and another was permanently brain damaged.
Incidents such as these could easily have been prevented if not for the sale of Novelty Lighters.

On January 1, 2008 USFA's NFIRS began to collect information pertaining specifically to novelty and toy like lighters. Listed in the Fire Module, under the code for Equipment Involved in Ignition, Code 877, described as 'Novelty Lighter'. Generally the Heat Source would be Lighter: Cigarette or Cigar Lighter, Code 65. According to NFIRS data, in residential child-play fires, lighters play a role nearly equal to matches. When a child set a fire in the home, the bedroom is commonly the area of fire origin, the ignited material generally being bedding, mattresses or clothing.

Passing the ban of the sale of Toy like and Novelty Lighters are some local and state governments, limiting their distribution. Maine was the first U.S. state to officially pass the legislative ban on toy like and novelty lighters on March 14, 2008. Soon to follow was Tennessee on April 2008. Many other states are considering a ban. Local jurisdictions have also passed ordinances, 19 of them being Arkansas, 6 in California and Yakima County in Washington State. As of June 2009, only 8 states have passed the legislation limiting or prohibiting the sale of novelty lighters and another 12 are considering. However, the problem not only lies on American soil. Overseas, the European Consumer Protection Commission adopted a decision on May 11, 2006 requiring Member States to ensure that cigarette lighters are child resistant when place on the EU market from March 11, 2007 on. This decision also prohibited placing lighters that resemble objects attractive to children on the market. "It's now time for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission to follow suit," says the National Association of State Fire Marshal's in a recently passed resolution. As Oregon State Fire Marshal Nancy Orr wrote to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, "There are no good reasons that lighters should be manufactured to resemble toys."

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