

Children and Fire Safety

I'd be willing to bet that most, if not all, of us remember the fire drills of school years past. These drills were a part of an elaborate plan to make us as students aware of the importance of having a "battle plan" in the event of a fire. They also stressed to us, especially in elementary school, the importance of having a planned escape route at home. All these measures to teach kids about fire safety are wonderful and still VERY important. However, despite all the good intentions of well-meaning school administrators, children playing with fire was the leading cause of fire deaths in St. Paul during the mid-80's. Thank goodness for the efforts of the St. Paul Fire Department of Fire and Safety Services. They saw the need for more fire safety education and did something about it. They developed a program called "Follow The Footsteps To Fire Safety". They made it available to every young child in elementary school and younger. This program is still in use today. It includes a ten-unit curriculum that covers basic fire safety information beneficial for a much broader age group than originally intended. Another component of the program is a video that covers preventing fire play, good fires, bad fires, and identifying hot things.

The efforts of the St. Paul Fire Department of Fire and Safety Services have helped save the lives of countless children. Since the program's induction in 1985, the number of children referred to the Department's Fire Play Intervention Program has dropped from 30% to 3%! Additionally, there have been NO deaths caused by children playing with fire! The only word to describe the results is "amazing". For \$39.95, parents can purchase the program's curriculum, video, and 30 stickers from the St. Paul Fire Department of Fire and Safety Services. It would be beneficial for parents to go through at least the video with ALL their children. I don't have kids, but even I know that a child's life is worth more than \$39.95 and the time it takes to go through a 12-minute video.

This is a "call to arms" directed at parents everywhere. Please contact the St. Paul Fire Department of Fire and Safety Services at 651-228-6203 and get more information about the "Follow The Footsteps To Fire Safety" program. Also, visit the Minnesota Safety Council's website at www.mnsafetycouncil.org to find out about more ways to keep your kids safe. I haven't experienced the pain that losing a child must bring. However, if it's anything close to the pain of losing a parent, it's something no one should have to experience.

The opinions are personal; the information was borrowed from the "Minnesota Safe Kids Coalition Update" newsletter online at www.mnsafetycouncil.org.