

**National Association of State Fire Marshals Recognize  
Arson Awareness Week – May 4 – 10, 2008**

“Toylike Lighters – Playing with Fire” is the theme for this year’s Arson Awareness Week. The theme draws attention to the increasing fire problem caused by children playing with lighters, oftentimes not being able to distinguish them between toys and toylike, or novelty lighters.

According to 2005 data, the [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#) estimates 323,900 fires were intentionally set. In 2002, the NFPA estimated 13,900 child-playing structure fires were reported in the U.S., with associated losses of 210 civilian deaths, 1,250 civilian injuries, and \$339 million in direct damage. Most child-playing home fires are started with lighters or matches.

In 1994, The Consumer Product Safety Commission set a mandatory safety standard that requires disposable lighters and certain novelty lighters to be child-resistant. The standard covers more than 95 percent of the 600 million lighters purchased in the United States each year; however, due to the increasing number of fatalities and injuries resulting from children playing with novelty lighters, many states are banning the sale and distribution of novelty lighters altogether.

The National Association of State Fire Marshal’s encourage parents and caregivers to be especially aware of the dangers associated with children playing with lighters and suggest the following safety tips:

- Purchase and use child-resistant lighters only. Remember that these are child-resistant, not childproof.
- Always keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children. Don’t assume that your child is too young
- Never use a lighter as a source of amusement for children. That practice may encourage children to think of lighters and matches as toys, not tools. Teach children to tell an adult if they find matches or lighters.

South Carolina State Fire Marshal John Reich reminds you that fire safety is your personal responsibility. Ensure that you have working smoke alarms in every room, practice fire exit drills, and consider installing residential sprinkler systems within your home.