

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

**An Examination of
Juvenile Firesetting
and the
Reasons that Kids Set Fires**

**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Leadership Command College**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research paper is to examine why kids set fires and what the causes of juvenile firesetting can be attributed to. For eleven straight years juveniles age 18 and under, have consistently accounted for approximately 50% or more of all arrests made nationwide for the crime of arson. Arson has the highest rate of juvenile involvement of any crime tracked by the Federal Bureau of Investigations. A questionnaire was presented to 20 juvenile male fire setters at the Cornell Abraxas Youth Fire Setter Program in South Mountain, Pennsylvania. This secure 36-bed treatment center houses juvenile males (ages 12 to 18) who all have serious firesetting histories. Most of these kids are sexual offenders as well. The data collected and analyzed demonstrates that these juveniles started setting fires as young as 1 ½ years old. With 11 of the twenty kids (55%) implying that their firesetting activity began before age ten, this clearly shows that these firesetting behaviors began at a very young age. More than one youth admitted to setting as many as 500 fires or more. Anger was the primary reason given for their fire setting behavior. Most came from a broken home. There have been four categories of juvenile firesetter identified. These four categories are curiosity firesetter, crisis firesetter, juvenile delinquent firesetter, and pathological or mentally disturbed firesetter. These juveniles can be further classified as little risk, some risk or definite risk for future fire setting behaviors. In conclusion, early identification of and intervention with these at-risk fire setting youth is necessary in order to break this difficult pattern of sometimes deadly fire setting behavior. This is the first step to treatment and recovery from this destructive and deadly behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

America is burning and too often it is our children who are doing the burning. The phenomenon of kids setting fires is taking a devastating toll all across the country. These fires maim and kill without discretion, with the largest death toll being that of young children. The purpose of this research paper is to examine why kids set fires and what the causes of juvenile fire setting can be attributed to. It is important to consider what compels a kid to set fire to a six story apartment building with families living there, a school building or church, the corner grocery store, or even the very homes they live in.

The following real case that was investigated by this author is as follows: Stephen M., a 12-year-old boy, awoke one night to find an unknown intruder downstairs. Stephen watched from the top of the stairway as the intruder set fire to the family living room downstairs. Stephen then watched as the arsonist left out of the front door and vanished into the night. As the flames grew downstairs, Stephen awakened his mother and two younger siblings who were asleep upstairs. He led his family down the stairs, past the now burning living room to safety out the front door. He was instantly praised as the hero of the day for saving his family from the fire. The dark clothed intruder/arsonist had vanished in the night.

After examining the fire scene, this investigator and others quickly determined that Stephen's story had some problems. After a Judge read his Juvenile Magistrates Warning, arson investigators questioned Stephen. After a lengthy interrogation in the Judges courtroom, and while his parents waited in the lobby, Stephen confessed to pouring gasoline throughout the downstairs and setting the fire in his living room after

dreaming that his parents were trying to kill him. He also confessed that he made up the story about the intruder, and that there was no one else involved in setting the fire except him. It was also learned that Stephen was under the care of a Psychiatrist for other mental health issues. Stephen was ultimately charged with arson and attempted murder and now resides in a Texas Youth Commission facility. The parents have since divorced.

The reasons that juveniles set fires are varied. Determining what course of action to take with these kids is challenging. In some instances, the juvenile will be referred to the juvenile justice system while at other times, fire safety education is all that is needed to abate this juvenile fire setting. While some may view juvenile arson as only a property crime, this arson investigator's experience has shown that juvenile arson is also a very violent crime against persons as well and needs to be treated as such. Juvenile fire setting continues to be a problem throughout the United States year after year.

Consider the following facts about juveniles and fire. Children intentionally set over 68,000 fires in 2002, resulting in 630 deaths and 2030 fire injuries. (Hall 2003). One third of all children who die in fires each year set the very fire that killed them. (Kolko, 2000). Arson is consistently the crime that has the highest rate of juvenile involvement. (FBI 2004). According to the FBI, in 2002 there were 11,052 arson arrests nationwide; 5553 (50.2%) were under the age of 18.

Many of these youthful offenders continue to set fires long after their first arson case has been adjudicated in the juvenile court system, even into adulthood. However, because it involves a fire communities often expect the fire service to handle the

problem. Because it derives its motivation from complex psychological dynamics, society often considers juvenile fire setting an issue for mental health professionals. Because it is possibly the crime of arson, some consider it a law enforcement problem. In reality, by effectively identifying and addressing juvenile fire setting and by holding the parents and the youth accountable all three disciplines are required to work together on the problem. (Wilcox & Zipper, 2005).

This author will utilize several methods to compile the necessary data needed to answer these questions for this paper. Interviewing local Juvenile Probation Officers and Arson Investigators will be a rich source for specific cases and material. There are published articles, papers, and (few) books written on the crime of juvenile arson offenders. Most importantly however, juvenile fire setters will be sought out and interviewed for a first person account of their fire setting experiences.

This author anticipates that this research will demonstrate that the factors which cause juveniles to set fires are measurable and these juveniles can be placed in specific fire-setting categories. Some of the factors that will be examined will be socioeconomic factors, demographics, family situations (dysfunctional families), and psychological issues of the youthful offender. This will begin their treatment and recovery from this sometimes-deadly fire setting behavior. For the purpose of this research, the definition of a juvenile will be a youth that is over the age of ten, but has not yet reached his or her eighteenth birthday.

This research is also intended to inform and provide education regarding some of the reasons that juveniles set fires to public servants, educators and mental health care workers that would not normally have a background in arson investigation. Included in

the author's intended audience are police officers, deputy sheriffs, constables, school officials, school resource officers, teachers, counselors and mental health care clinicians. There is a very good chance that many law enforcement officers or school officials will come in contact with a juvenile fire setter in his or her career and may not understand the dynamics involved with these juvenile fire setters. Additionally, mental health care workers that may not have previously been exposed to juvenile fire setters may find themselves counseling such youth.

The first step in abating this fire problem is to identify those youths who are at risk for fire setting. Once juvenile fire setting is understood, only then can the problem be confronted. If these youthful offenders are to be truly rehabilitated then real solutions will need to be identified. As these solutions are implemented by the juvenile justice system, then and only then can the violent and many times deadly cycle of fire setting be broken.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following review of literature will explain what various researchers and writers have already learned about juvenile fire setting. While some of the earliest research on this topic occurred in the early 1940's, the first published review of literature on juvenile fire setting was completed in 1976 (Heath, Gayton, & Hardesty, 1976). Sigmund Freud wrote about pyromania over 60 years ago. Although many books have been written about arson in general, there have been very few books written that are devoted exclusively to juvenile fire setting. Most modern psychiatric or psychology text books contain at least some writings on juvenile fire setting. Many very well written

magazine articles have been published on the subject. This author will attempt to review the latest and most current literature in order to gain insight into this topic.

In an article for *Psychology Today* in 1985, author Wayne Wooden outlined four distinct categories for juvenile firesetters. His four categories are curious, problem ridden, delinquent and mentally disturbed. Wooden describes “curious” firesetters as young males up to age ten. These juveniles accidentally set fires while playing with matches and lighters. These very young children who start fires have no intent to destroy and are usually not bent on destruction, but rather are simply curious or fascinated by the flames. Typically, there is little or no parental supervision and usually very little if any fire safety education. These are the kids who after setting a small fire run and hide in their closet or under their bed. These fires are usually the most deadly and costly because of limited communication skills needed to alert parents and others of the fire. In fact, fires set by younger children often incur more monetary damage than fires set by older adolescents.. Fires set by younger children also often displace more people than fires set by older adolescents. (Wilcox & Zipper, 2005). One third of all children who die in fires each year are also the very ones who set them. (Kolko, 2000). For some children, setting a fire can take on a form of entertainment. For example, fire trucks are no longer a fearful thing but are very exciting to watch. (Wooden, 1985).

Wooden’s second group is the “problem ridden” firesetters”. This is the largest percentage of firesetters and is often described as a cry for help. Juvenile firesetters most often have low self-esteem, limited social problem solving skills and often do not have the necessary tools needed in negotiating complex social interactions. (Wilcox & Zipper, 2005). With most of these children, there is underlying emotional or physical

stressors present that he or she cannot express or deal with. These children are merely expressing their feelings of stress, anxiety and fear by setting a fire. Their fire setting absolutely draws attention to themselves and their problems. To these troubled and often lonely youth, negative attention is better than getting no attention at all and can give them a sense of power and control not otherwise found in their lives. Their fires are usually set at or near their home and are usually set alone. Many times the fire is set in their bedroom, their mother's clothes, or some other place or thing in their home. Setting fire to a bed can suggest that the child is very unhappy with his entire life since a bed should represent a warm and secure place for any child. Whatever is set on fire is many times a target of their underlying anger. (Wooden, 1985).

“Delinquent” firesetters make up approximately 14% of fires set by juveniles. These are juveniles acting out against authority and are usually older males ages 10 to 17. These youths have more freedom from parental supervision and usually partake in their fire setting activities in groups often due to heightened peer pressure. A child who was a loner can suddenly be “one of the guys” by setting something on fire. Often these kids have a history of antisocial behavior and previous fire setting. Usually, they are already known to local law enforcement officers and the juvenile justice system. These fires are a continuation of cries unanswered or a response to deal with stress and strife in their often tumultuous lives. Sometimes these acts of random vandalism are due to boredom or the need for excitement. Usually, these fires are set to objects viewed as safe to burn such as abandoned buildings, old sheds or dumpsters. These delinquent youth do not want to get caught, unlike the crisis fire setter who is crying out to get caught. In some instances these juveniles may take out their anger on school buildings.

Studies have shown that public schools lose approximately \$250 million per year to juvenile fire setting. (Wooden, 1985).

The smallest group that Wooden examines is the “mentally disturbed” firesetter. These are extreme cases and are relatively rare. These are the juveniles who are suffering from a plethora of mental and psychological issues such as schizophrenia, multiple personalities, drug abuse, and depression just to name a few. In The Bronx, New York, “Son of Sam” David Berkowitz started setting fires as a juvenile and eventually set more than 2000 fires and called in 837 false alarms from 1974 to 1977. As a result of killing six people and injuring several others, Berkowitz is classified as a mass murderer as well as a true pyromaniac. (Rider, 1980). These firesetters are impulsive, neurotic, impatient and almost hyperactive. They are poor sleepers who like to destroy things. Many have numerous phobias, are psychotic, have extreme mood swings and uncontrolled anger. These fire setters need immediate mental health care that is beyond what fire educators can provide. (Wooden, 1985).

In his book *Drawn to the Flame: Assessment and Treatment of Juvenile Firesetting Behavior*, author Robert Stadolnik also classifies juvenile fire setters into four categories that are very similar to Wooden’s categories. These four categories include the follow: curiosity firesetter, crisis firesetter, delinquent firesetter, and pathological firesetter. Many other researchers and mental health care practitioners recognize and adhere to these four categories when discussing or treating the juvenile firesetter.

Stadolnik’s first category is the “curiosity” motivated firesetter. These are those kids that are playing with matches and lighters. There is no intent to destroy anything and these kids are typically male’s ages three to seven. Many of these kids are suffering

from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); are hard to control, aggressive and mischievous. These youth have minimal verbal skills and learn by touch, experimenting and manipulating things, not by asking questions. They have little or no understanding of fire safety education. Typically, these youth are early risers seeking physical stimulation such as TV and video games. After the fire these kids are often remorseful about their fire setting activity. With proper fire safety education many of these kids do not set other fires. (Stadolnik, 2000).

The second category is the “crisis” motivated firesetter. These are typically adolescent and teen boys. They may or may not have a history of fire setting. This behavior is often a cry for help. These juveniles are in some type of a crisis such as anger towards someone or something and they do not know how to deal with it. These youth are most likely to be socially awkward and have few friends. They feel powerless and are typically loners. Often there is a history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Their fire is a way to draw attention to their problem or crisis. (Stadolnik, 2000).

“Delinquent” motivated firesetter are typically older youth and teenagers age 10 to 17. This category however is comprised of up to 25 to 30% females. Gangs fall into this category. These children often have poor social skills and often suffer from ADHD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Many of these youth have a history of school and behavioral problem such as being defiant of authority. These kids have usually had some fire safety education and clearly understand the dangers of fires. (Stadolnik, 2000).

The smallest category that Stadolnik discusses is the “pathological” firesetter which is a mostly male ages 13 to 17. Many of those in this group have chronic multiple

psychological deficits, few if any social skills, and almost no interpersonal relations with their peers. These youths have had a poor response to multiple, previous interventions with the juvenile justice system and mental health care. Often parents, stepparents, older siblings, or other adults have victimized them sexually, physically and emotionally. Fire setting is a coping mechanism for these very troubled juveniles. This last group is beyond fire safety education and extensive mental health care is the only option at this point. (Stadolnik, 2000).

In 1997 the United States Fire Administration (USFA), along with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) made the decision to integrate several previously published FEMA publications into one. Dr. Jessica Gaynor was chosen to oversee this undertaking and was the main writer for this project. The result was a widely accepted publication, the *Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Handbook*. Fire Departments and Fire Marshal's Offices all across America have adopted this as the manual by which they operate their Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Programs (JFIP). Dr. Gaynor's conclusions were not all that different from Stadolnik, Wooden and others before and after them.

The FEMA model begins with a pre-fire setting category known as "fire interest". In this group there is no fire setting at all. This interest in fire is common and normal with the juveniles being between the ages of three and five. These very young children are naturally curious about fire such as candles, fireplaces and BBQ pits. They ask a lot of questions about fire and tend to express interest in all things to do with fire such as wearing fire hats, playing with toy fire trucks and cooking food on toy stoves. There is

no fire setting activity here, just normal, natural child curiosity. It is time to teach them about fire safety. (Gaynor, 1997).

“Firestarting” is FEMA’s term for young kids who begin to experiment with ignition sources. These kids are typically ages three to nine. Again, these are kids playing with matches or lighters. They are beginning to act on their curiosity. These children like to start fires in a supervised manner such as helping dad light the BBQ pit or to light their own birthday candles. Feeling a little empowered, he or she might set small fires at home to toys, bedding, clothing or other available objects. There is no intent to damage or destroy, only a desire to play or experiment. Often, very deadly consequences can occur here because the child will run and hide and because he does not tell anyone about this small fire it quickly grows out of control. Limited verbal skills prevent others in the burning building from being alerted, often resulting in deadly consequences. This is the category that results in the most fire deaths and causes the most monetary damage. (Gaynor, 1997).

“Firesetting” is intentional and is usually the older juveniles’ ages 10 to 17 that definitely know some about fire safety. These kids are acting out against someone or crying for help related to some crisis. These fires are usually set along with other juveniles due to peer pressure.. They may be associated with psychological or social problems. The event is planned with the materials and lighter or matches gathered ahead of time which are then hidden and stored up for the future fire event. This is not a spur of the moment or bad judgment fire. The juvenile firesetter rarely attempts to extinguish or alert authorities; instead he or she likes to return to watch the fire burn. (Gaynor, 1997).

The “arson or pathological” set fire is one that is of a purely delinquent behavior. This is not an accidental fire, but rather a malicious and intentional act to burn and destroy something. The firesetter intentionally wants to destroy something. This is the crime of arson and as such will be treated as a crime. Sometimes these juveniles have mental deficits and need further evaluation and treatment by the appropriate mental health care professional.

The FEMA model further categorizes a risk level for each firesetter as little risk, some risk or definite risk. In the category of little risk, curiosity and experimentation motivate at least 60% to 70% of these unsupervised firesetters. There is little risk of further firesetting with proper fire safety education. The definite risk category accounts for about 30% to 40% of all juvenile firesetters and includes troubled and delinquent youth. With the troubled juveniles, there is a cry for help to bring attention to their psychological stress. Emotional conflicts due to family turmoil such as abuse, neglect and school difficulties are the reason for these fires. Delinquent juveniles are most often those kids and teens that are aggressive and deviant. Exhibiting criminal behaviors comes very natural to these troubled youth. These juveniles have serious emotional or family dysfunction. Fire safety will help some, but often will not turn them around at this point. If these fires meet the requirements of arson, these youth should be charged and referred to the juvenile justice system. This is usually the biggest and costliest fire problem challenging any community.

The smallest category is extreme risk, which is comprised of less than 1% of fire setting juveniles. These youth suffer significant mental dysfunctions such as: psychotic disturbances, schizophrenia, affective disorders, mental retardation, fetal alcohol

syndrome as well as other mental health issues. These juveniles are truly disturbed and mentally ill. They are a definite danger to themselves and others, and as such, measures should immediately be taken to secure and protect this child. Pyromania falls into this category and is very rare. These kids are beyond the help that fire officials can offer and need serious, immediate psychological help. Fire education at this point will not work; charge these young arsonists with felony arson and refer them to juvenile services.

METHODOLOGY

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this paper is to examine why kids set fires and what the causes of juvenile fire setting can be attributed to.. This researcher hypothesizes that the available research already conducted by others as well as new original research in the form of a questionnaire will show that there are some very distinct reasons as to why juveniles set fires. Furthermore, it is believed that the research will demonstrate that all juvenile fire setters with the proper intervention and diagnostic tools can be methodically placed in these very distinct categories thereby beginning their treatment. The first step to treatment is recognizing that a problem exists.

The Cornell Abraxas Youth Center Firesetter Program, under the guidance of Psychologist Dr. Alan Feldberg, is located in South Mountain, Pennsylvania. It is a one of a kind secure 36 bed residential program that provides specialty treatment to juvenile males between the ages of 12 to 18. These youth have substantial and lengthy history with setting fires and detonating illegal explosives. Many of these young boys are sexual offenders as well. On August 24, 2006, while attending a Juvenile Fire Setter

School at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, this researcher had the opportunity to visit this unique facility and interview several of these fire-setting youth. A questionnaire was presented to a total of 20 randomly selected youth in this secure and controlled facility. The author's return was 100%, or 20 questionnaires that were filled out. The Senior Treatment Supervisor, Brian Dean, facilitated the selection process and completion of the questionnaire. The data gathered will be categorized and analyzed in the following section of this paper. This author also conducted one on one interviews with 4 of the 36 children in this facility to gain further insight. A copy of the questionnaire is in the appendix.

FINDINGS

In the questionnaire, the juvenile fire setters at the Cornell Abraxas Center in Pennsylvania were asked how many fires they have set in their lives. The answers ranged from one fire set to two juveniles admitting to setting over 500 fires. Several juveniles admitted that they had set several hundred fires in their lives. Only one juvenile denied ever setting any fires. This information is illustrated in Figure 1.

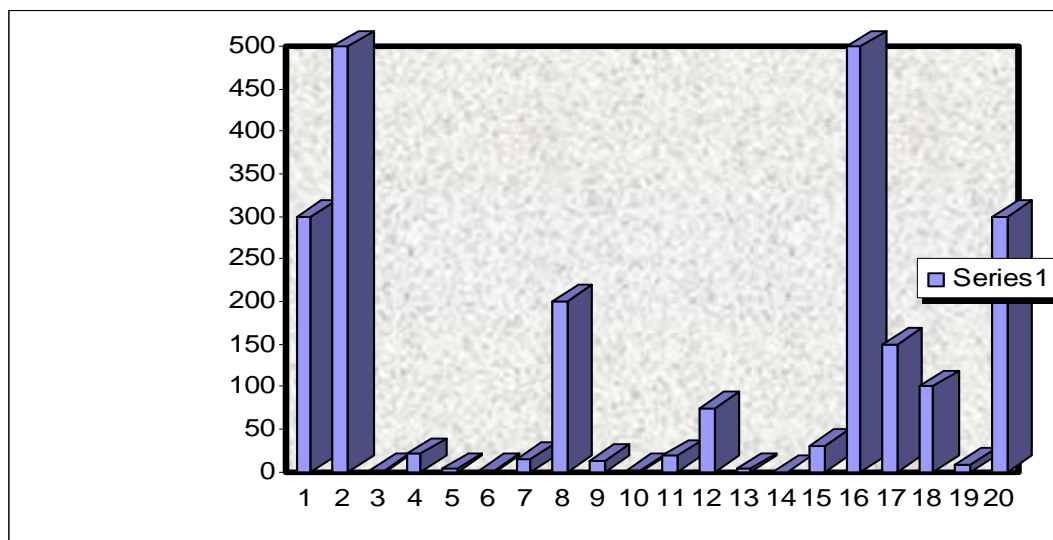
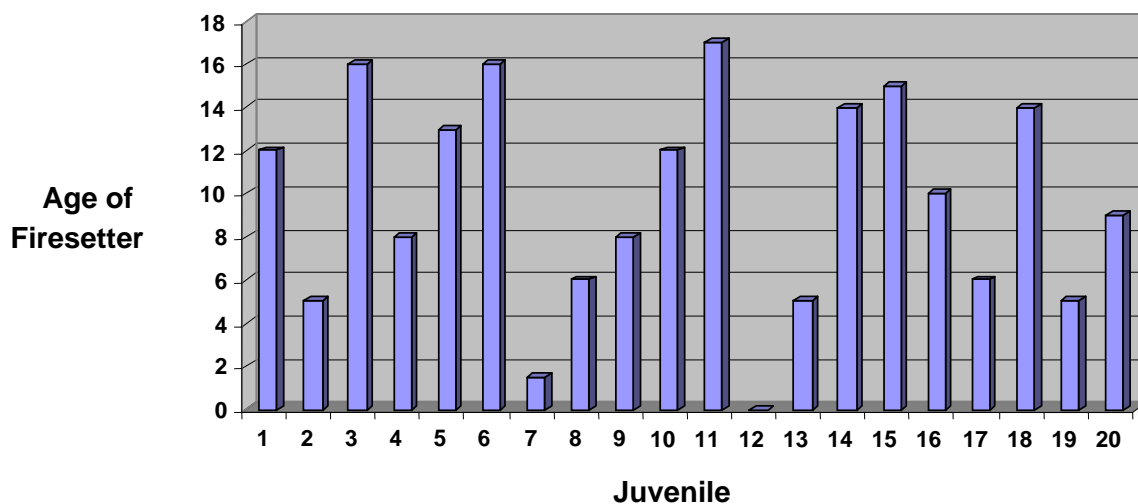


Figure 1: Number of fires each juvenile admitted to setting in his life.

The juveniles were also questioned as to how old they were when they set their very first fire. Only nine or 45% of the respondents were over the age of ten when they began their fire setting. The remaining boys were between the ages of 11 and 18 when they set their first fire. This clearly indicates that these youth started setting fires when they were very young. Figure 2 shows us that one juvenile stated that he set his first fire when he was only 1-½ years old.

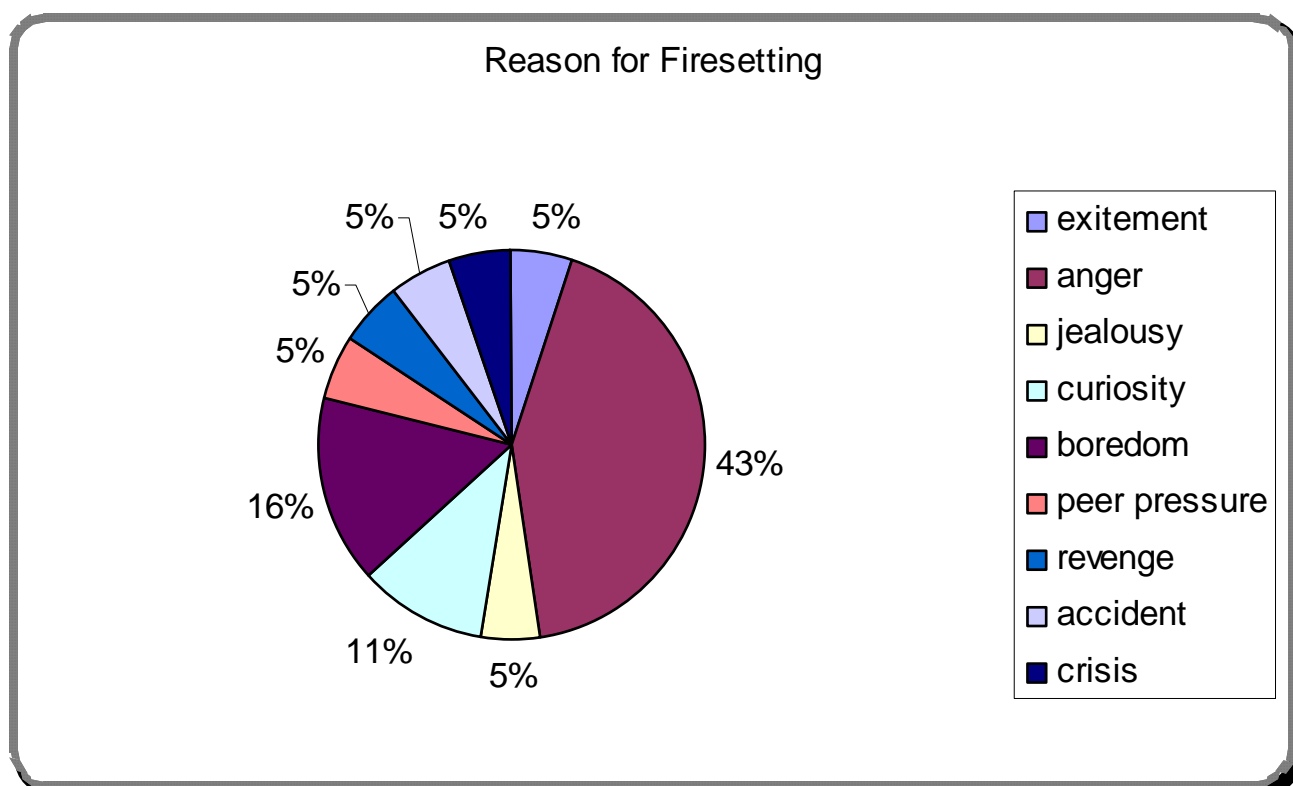
Figure 2: Age of Juvenile When Admits to Setting His First Fire.



One of the most important questions being examined in this research is to determine the reasons that these juveniles are setting fires. As clearly indicated by the pie chart in Figure 3, anger was the reason cited for 43% of the fires set. These juveniles would therefore fall into the “crisis fire setter” or possibly the “juvenile delinquent” category. Boredom and curiosity were also major reasons that these youth

set their fires. Some of the other reasons cited by the youth were excitement, jealousy, peer pressure, revenge, accident or crisis.

Figure 3: Reasons given for firesetting



Another important finding from the questionnaire demonstrates that the majority of these kids come from a broken home. Only one juvenile or 5% of the kids questioned indicated that he lived with both his Mom and Dad when he set his fire. Two of the youth indicated they lived with “family” and might well be from a broken or dysfunctional home as well. The remaining 17 kids or 85% of those juveniles surveyed indicated that they lived with only one biological parent and a stepparent or other guardians. One

youth indicated that he lived alone. These broken or dysfunctional homes most likely played a role in these youths' fire setting.

The most common source of ignition used by this group of juveniles to start their fires was lighters (85%) with matches or other sources making up the remaining 15%. Forty percent (40%) of the youth surveyed indicated that they used an accelerant in setting their fire. In two of the fires (20%) the juvenile stated that someone was hurt.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

This author has attempted to examine the reasons why kids set fires and what the causes of juvenile fire setting can be attributed to. The purpose of this research was to determine whether or not there were categories or patterns for juvenile fire setting. This researcher hypothesized that there were distinct categories and that with the proper interview techniques all juvenile fire setters could be identified as to the cause of their fire setting behavior. The findings in my questionnaire presented at the Cornell Abraxas Center mirrored the results of other independent research as to the reasons for juvenile fire setting. This research clearly shows that the accepted findings of several sources indicate four distinct categories of fire setters. Although called by different names, the categories outlined by authors Kolko, Wooden, Stadolnik and Gaynor are all very similar. Curiosity or firestarting is comprised of those kids that are playing with matches or lighters, and in which there is no intent to burn anything down. The next category is problem ridden, crisis, or firesetting which is typically a cry for help from a juvenile in a crisis of some sort. The delinquent or arson categories are those juvenile delinquents with the intention of destroying something. The last and smallest category is

mentally disturbed or pathological. These youths suffer from severe mental issues, possibly pyromania, and are very rare

While many of these juvenile fire setters would benefit from fire safety education some will need to be referred to the juvenile justice system. Law enforcement officers, arson investigators and the fire service should be very diligent when dealing with a juvenile fire setter. They should be very careful about choosing whether or not to act on a known juvenile fire setter. Allowing a known juvenile firesetter to go unchallenged creates a risk for the authorities. The juvenile could very well set another fire, causing further property damage, endangering lives or even causing the death of someone. Charging a juvenile with the crime of arson represents a way to hold that juvenile and his parents responsible for his actions. It forces the juvenile to face the problem and to understand the seriousness of his actions as well as recognizing the need of to be a part of an intervention program. Either way, once these kids are identified they can then begin the often long journey to recovery.

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APPENDIX 1

Texas Penal Code

Sec. 28.02. Arson.

(a) A person commits an offense if the person starts a fire, regardless of whether the fire continues after ignition, or causes an explosion with intent to destroy or damage:

(1) any vegetation, fence, or structure on open-space land; or

(2) any building, habitation, or vehicle:

(A) knowing that it is within the limits of an incorporated city or town;

(B) knowing that it is insured against damage or destruction;

(C) knowing that it is subject to a mortgage or other security interest;

(D) knowing that it is located on property belonging to another;

(E) knowing that it has located within it property belonging to another; or

(F) when the person is reckless about whether the burning or explosion will endanger the life of some individual or the safety of the property of another.

(b) It is an exception to the application of Subsection (a)(1) that the fire or explosion was a part of the controlled burning of open-space land.

(c) It is a defense to prosecution under Subsection (a)(2)(A) that prior to starting the fire or causing the explosion, the actor obtained a permit or other written authorization granted in accordance with a city ordinance, if any, regulating fires and explosions.

(d) An offense under this section is a felony of the second degree, except that the offense is a felony of the first degree if it is shown on the trial of the offense that:

(1) bodily injury or death was suffered by any person by reason of the commission of the offense; or

(2) the property intended to be damaged or destroyed by the actor was a habitation or a place of assembly or worship.

APPENDIX 2***The Bill Blackwood Institute*****Sam Houston State University Huntsville, Texas**

"Why Do Kids Set Fires?"

An Examination of Causes for Juvenile Arson

Applied Research Paper Questionnaire**scott.burlin@mctx.org**

1. Age and sex of Juvenile? _____

2. How old were you when you set your first fire? _____

3. How many fires do you think you have ever set in your life? _____

4. What did you set on fire that caused you to be placed in this facility?

5. Was anyone hurt in this fire? If so, whom? _____

6. Why did you set this fire? (Circle one)
 - Anger (if so, angry at whom?) _____
 - Crisis fire setter
 - Curiosity

APPENDIX 2 (cont)

- Boredom
- Peer pressure
- Gang related
- For Money
- Other reason_____

7. How did starting this fire make you feel? (Circle one)

- Sad
- Remorse
- Happy
- Scared
- Other feelings

8. What did you use to set this fire? (Circle one)

- Lighter
- Matches
- Other_____

9. Who did you live with at the time of the fire? _____