



Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association

Together We Can Make A Difference

800-375-5886

www.wsfca.com

Education • Prevention • Safety • Supression • EMS

DATE: April 13, 2010
TO: Assembly Consumer Protection Committee
FROM: WI State Fire Chiefs Association
RE: Support Novelty Lighter Ban

The Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association asks that you support Assembly Bill 890 banning the sale of novelty lighters to minors and the display of the novelty lighters in retail establishments.

Toylite or novelty lighters have been responsible for injuries, deaths, and accidents across the Nation. Children are attracted to novelty lighters because they look like toys. Many of these lighters look like animals, miniature cars, mobile phones, cameras, fishing lures, stacks of coins, markers, and doll accessories. One lighter is nearly identical to the popular rubber ducky bath toy—it even quacks! There are also toylite and novelty lighters that look like tools such as tape measures, drills, hammers, and paint brushes. Ironically, there are even lighters that mimic a Dalmatian donning a fire helmet, a red fire truck, or fire extinguishers.

A fire marshal in Wisconsin was making a purchase at a local home improvement store when his 12-year-old daughter picked up what she believed was a tape measure. When she clicked the button on the tape measure, a flame came out. Fortunately, the child was not hurt, and the store owner voluntarily stopped selling the lighters.

The National Fire Incident Reporting System (NIFRS) data indicates that lighters play a role nearly equal to matches in residential child-play fires, and some studies show that lighters tend to be the preferred ignition source. When children set fires in the home, the most common area of fire origin is the bedroom, and the material ignited is often bedding, mattresses, or clothing.

Intentionally set fires are the major cause of dollar losses from fires and a leading cause of fire deaths in the United States. In 2002, the National Fire Protection Association (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. The median age of children who start reported fires by playing is 5 years old, compared to a median age of 4 years old for fatal victims, and a median age in the late teens for nonfatal injuries.

Please help make Wisconsin a fire safe state by supporting Assembly Bill 890 prohibiting the sale of novelty lighters to minors. If you have any questions please contact David Bloom, Legislative Liaison, WI State Fire Chiefs Association at 608-444-3324.

6737 W. Washington St. • Suite 1420 • Milwaukee, WI 53214
800-375-5886 • 414-755-6291 • Fax: 414-276-7704
info@wsfca.com • www.wsfca.com