

Fire Prevention

• Keep 'em Reading •

by | Pat Miller

In my childhood jewelry box there is a tarnished brass Junior Fire Marshall badge. I earned it by taking a fire safety course in fifth grade. Throughout my years of teaching, I've participated in hundreds of fire drills. I've tested my home smoke alarms regularly, practiced home drills with my family, taken students on fire department field trips and taught fire safety for the last thirty-two fire safety weeks. I've been fortunate to have never needed any of the information I've learned. Hopefully what you teach your students based on this article will help them be just as prepared, and will remain just as untested. Use the following books and Web sites to promote Fire Prevention Week (October 9–15), groups or as part of a whole class instruction.

Fire Drills

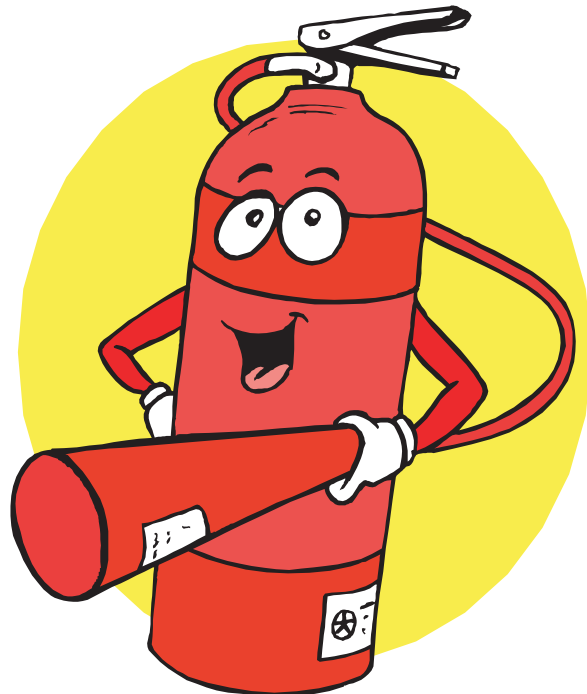
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Students become accustomed to fire drills at school, but it is more likely they will be involved in a home fire than in a fire at school. Make students aware of the need for practicing a fire drill at home by sharing the following books and Web sites.

Arthur calms D.W.'s worries about a fire at home by practicing home fire drills with her and the rest of the family in *Arthur's Fire Drill*. One of the hazards of having a dragon over to visit is that they breathe fire. In *No Dragons for Tea: Fire Safety for Kids (And Dragons)*, a little girl's house catches fire after the dragon sneezes. This book gives practical information without scaring young listeners. The dragon does all the wrong things, which lightens things with humor and allows the girl to show the right responses without becoming didactic.

A nonfiction book to share is *A Kid's Guide to Staying Safe Around Fire*, particularly the sections about how to plan an emergency exit for a family and practicing a home fire drill. Use the book as a starting point to discuss what students already know about fire drills at home, and to fill in any missing information they need. At the *Home Fire Escape Plan* Web site, www.nfpa.org/sparky, you can download a grid with instructions for drawing a home fire safety map as well as links to more information. Students and their parents can sketch a cooperative map for how they will exit each room (two exits per room in case one is blocked) and where they will meet once they are out of the house.

The New York Department of State Fire Safety has two Internet pages you can duplicate to send home. At www.dos.state.ny.us/kidsroom/firesafe/lessons.html, families can read a one-page explanation for having an EDITH plan (Exit Drills in the Home). The next page is a bulleted list of instructions for conducting an EDITH drill.



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This would be a good homework assignment during Fire Prevention Week, an extra-credit assignment or something to discuss if you have televised announcements at your school.

Fire Safety

Emily and Makayla use the information they have learned about fire safety when they discover smoke coming from their neighbor's yard. Read about their actions in *Do You Smell Smoke? A Story About Safety With Fire*. A useful nonfiction title with clear photographs is *Fire Safety*. It talks about good fires and bad fires, how to prevent the latter and what to do in the event of a house fire.

After sharing these titles or ones you have in your collection, have students partner up at library computers and go to www.firesafety.gov/kids/flash.shtm. This is *FireSafety.gov*, produced by the National Administration of Fire. The Hazard House asks students to click on eight hazards they see in a room. For each one they find, a pop-up box explains the reason, and either removes or corrects the hazard. Coloring sheets at the same address allow students to click on a palette, then on an area of the picture to color it. All pictures are related to fire safety and have a caption with a safety tip. There are also crosswords and word searches related to fire safety in the games section.

Fire Engines

Whether they've seen one up close, or just roaring down the street with sirens clanging and lights flashing, your boys and girls are curious about these big rigs. Check your shelves or the bibliography for any of a number of books about fire engines. *What's Inside a Fire Truck?* describes the ladder and pumper truck's uses and equipment. Visit www.dos.state.ny.us/kidsroom/fire-safe/trucks.html to see the different kinds of fire trucks. A third kind is the tanker truck that carries 1,000 gallons of water to a site where there are no hydrants, pools or other water sources. The tanker carries a collapsible pool that it uses to discharge the water so firefighters can use it to fight the fire while the tanker returns to a water source and refills.



The Kern County Fire Department, www.co.kern.ca.us/fire/media/index.htm, lets students click on "Explore a New Fire Engine" to see the latest engine, the Pierce 'Sable' model, up close, or click on "Explore Charlie 3" to see the special unit used to fight airport and plane fires.

Firefighters and Fire Stations

Kindergartners often get a visit from the local fire truck and/or firefighters, or take a field trip to a local fire station. Extend their learning, or prepare for such a field trip, by sharing books similar to these. *Fire Fighter!* describes a day in the life of a firefighter. *Fire Station Number 4: The Daily Life of Firefighters* gives more specifics about the daily activities performed by firefighters in Livermore, California, near San Francisco. Use the first title for younger students, the latter for your older readers.

The Kern County Fire Department in Bakersfield, California, www.co.kern.ca.us/fire/media/index.htm, offers a slide show of twenty images of their firefighters, equipment and special events. Download the Juvision plug-in available on-site at "About the Media" for two virtual field trips. Both include a 360° tour of a fire station. Station 67 is a neighborhood fire station. Station 62 is an airport station. Both include numerous captioned photos, including Station 67's mascot, which, surprisingly, is not

a Dalmatian. If students ask or wonder about Dalmatians and their links to fire departments, send them to the colorful kid-friendly site called Sparky the Great Fire Dog, www.nfpa.org/sparky.

Find lesson plans to use or share with teachers at www.firesafety.gov/kids/parents-teachers. Download detailed plans and hot links for Fire Escape Planning, Home Fire Safety and Smoke Alarms. There is also a download site for clip art related to fire safety that you can use on your letters to parents, worksheets or Web sites.

Bibliography

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- *Fire Truck* by Caroline Bingham. DK Publishing, 2003.
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- *No Dragons for Tea: Fire Safety for Kids (and Dragons)* by Jean Pendziwol. Kids Can Press, 1999.
- *What's Inside a Fire Truck?* by Sharon Gordon. Benchmark Books, 2004.

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