



CITY OF BELLAIRE

Fire Department

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Darryl Anderson

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Dear Parents,

On Saturday March 29th at approximately 4:30 AM, an individual or group of individuals set fire to playground equipment at Russ Pittman Park, 7112 Newcastle Rd, Bellaire TX. The equipment was completely destroyed.

Juvenile fire setting is a progressive problem, starting with small fires and growing until there is major damage or death. Usually it begins with a fascination and can grow to a compulsion. Fire Setters range in age from 5-18; the older the starter the deeper the psychological motivation. Historically a juvenile fire starter lives in a single parent home. The fire can be a fascination, a cry for help or intent to destroy. There is an intervention that has shown remarkable progress in stopping this behavior but we can't help without knowledge of the fire starter.

I am asking for your help in solving this incident. Did your son or daughter spend the night with a friend on this date or were you out of town and your child was home alone? When you did laundry, did you notice the smell of gas or other flammable liquid on his or her clothes (cover story could be "I ran out of gas")? Does your child have singed hair or eyebrows and the story told just doesn't fit? Have you noticed spent matches lying around your house or yard and you didn't use them or have you found small areas of burned grass or leaves? Has your child been involved in a troubling relationship with friends? Has he/she lashed out recently, especially involving physical aggression? Has there been a disturbing family argument and your child has been withdrawn? A single factor doesn't indicate the potential to be a fire starter but a combination of factors, especially singed hair or accelerant odors, may indicate otherwise. It is possible that the fire starter used an available opportunity to start the fire, a one-time experiment that got out of hand. Another possibility could be a child, who saw the park as part of his/her childhood experience, and changes in the family structure (divorce/separation) caused a desire to destroy that memory, not the human players. Whatever the motive, help is available.

If you have information that may help us help this individual, please call the Bellaire Fire Marshal's Office at 713-662-8203.

Thank you,
Darryl Anderson, Chief
Bellaire Fire Department.