



City of Madison Fire Department

News Release

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SALE OF NOVELTY LIGHTERS BANNED WITHIN THE CITY OF MADISON

The City of Madison joins Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Virginia and Maine in adopting novelty lighter bans. Other states and jurisdictions are currently considering bans.

The ban on the sale of novelty lighters was approved by the Mayor, which created Madison General Ordinance (MGO) 34.42, Prohibiting the retail sale and distribution of novelty lighters.

A novelty lighter is a lighter that is attractive to children because they have the likeness of a toy. Some novelty lighters resemble toys, musical instruments, toy animals, play musical notes or have flashing lights.

The new ordinance allows, the Fire Marshal, police officers, code enforcement officers, any community education officer and any other City official authorized to enforce any provision of the code to enforce the sale of novelty lighters.

The penalty for the sale or distribution of novelty lighters within the City of Madison can result in fines for up to \$500.

Below are samples of novelty lighters -





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According to the National Fire Protection Association, novelty lighters, also known as toy-like lighters, are cigarette lighters disguised as that look like small children's toys or regular household items. In the hands of small children they can be very dangerous. Because they are so well toys, a child could easily pick one up to play with it without realizing that it could be very hazardous.

Toylike 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.

- On September 25, 2007, 15-month-old Peyton Edwards and 2-year-old Breydon Edwards of Russellville, Arkansas, died after setting fire to their apartment with a motorcycle-shaped lighter.
- In Oregon, one child died and another was permanently brain damaged after a 6-year-old, playing with a lighter that looked like a toy dolphin, started a fire.
- 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.

Children are not the only ones fooled by novelty lighters. Beaverton, Michigan, resident Laura Fowler purchased a novelty lighter for her 4-year-old child after mistaking it for a toy. In 2006, a South Carolina woman shot herself in the hand while attempting to light a cigarette with what she thought was a pistol-shaped novelty lighter.

The novelty lighters resemble toys, animals, tools, pens, cards, vehicles; they play musical notes or have flashing lights.

Ironically, there are even lighters that mimic a Dalmatian donning a fire helmet, a red fire truck, or fire extinguishers.

Intentionally set fires are the major cause of dollar losses from fires and a leading cause of fire deaths in the United States. According to 2005 data, the [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#) estimates some 323,900 fires were intentionally set. In 2002, the NFPA estimated



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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. Locally, 55 fires were started by cigarette lighters.

These injuries and deaths cry out to us to take action and remove these dangerous lighters from shelves everywhere.

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