



FIRE SAFE KIDS

Pre-primary



Fire safety for pre-primary children

Many CFA brigades have traditionally visited kindergartens or childcare centres as part of their activities but the approach and content varies depending on the brigade involved.

Working with pre-primary children on fire safety needs to be done with extreme caution. Some may experience increased fire safety knowledge; however, some may not be able to appropriately apply their newly gained knowledge. For some pre-primary children there may be increased fire play in the short term.

Also, due to the way children less than five years of age think and learn, a fire safety lesson provides limited benefit for very young children. Children under five confuse fantasy with reality, can have a lack of appreciation of the consequences of danger and may not see the potential dangers in a situation. One such example could be in the case of a fire: a very young child may hide rather than flee. Pre-primary children find it hard to apply things learnt in a simulated setting to an actual situation.

This is why CFA has chosen to introduce an awareness session rather than lesson for this age group. The new pre-primary session and associated materials are based on firefighters as helpers in the community, and an introduction of what they do. This session is meant to be conducted as an excursion to the fire station to see the working environment of firefighters. CFA does not want to penalise schools that do not have the funding or capability of an excursion, so the session can also be run as an incursion. CFA has aligned the pre-primary session materials with the Early Years Learning Framework from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).

There is some evidence that when taught a formal lesson such as 'Dial triple zero in an emergency', some preschoolers will inappropriately dial triple zero, resulting in a false alarm. This should be taken into account when introducing this topic or when discussing it with teaching staff.

It is important that when visiting pre-primary age children brigades exercise caution and not over-excite children by bringing in trucks, sirens and water. A low key approach of a firefighter dressed in response ensemble with associated items, such as breathing apparatus, is best.

Fire Safe Kids formal lessons begin at primary school, with an increased schedule of information, as this is the age group among whom fire safety education is likely to be most effective.

Please note:

It is preferred that pre-primary groups visit their local fire station to begin this learning. Presenters should ask teachers to arrange for parents to attend as well – stipulate one adult for every two children.

Where centre location or travel costs rule out an excursion, presenters may visit childcare centres.