



Kids' Fire Safety House

Each year in the United States thousands of people are burned or killed in residential fires. The vast majority of these fire victims are children and the elderly. Case studies indicate many of these injuries and deaths could have been prevented if children had been taught a few basic concepts about fire and burn safety. The lesson is education is a powerful tool in fighting fires...and a potential lifesaver.

In response to this need, as a top priority, the Public Education unit works to reduce deaths and injuries among this group through its Kidsafe program. This program, designed by Oklahoma Fire Department and introduced to Milpitas in 1995, trains early childhood educators in fire and burn safety practices through its "Train the Trainer" program. Milpitas Fire Department teaches every Community Preschool in this very important program. Recently, it was expanded to reach Milpitas Home School groups too.

To enhance our fire safety programs, in September of 1997 a Kid's Fire Safety House manufactured by Mobile Concepts was purchased. This trailer, a two-story mobile home is made specifically to teach children about fire and life safety. The Kid's Safety House is a mobile "classroom". It features child-sized rooms, fixtures and appliances; and real-life hazards - including smoke and heat. It also meets ADA requirements for clearance and passage areas.

A nontoxic Smoke System allows children to practice "crawling low" below smoke. The F-100 Performance Smoke Generator creates the safe smoke. A Heated Door demonstrates the need to feel closed doors for heat before opening. - A warm or "hot" door means that a fire is on the other side. A log-lit Fireplace is the focal point of the living room; it creates an ideal environment for group discussions on hazards common to this room of the House. An Escape Ladder is used to exit from the second story bedroom window. A fully equipped Kitchen, 9-1-1 Phone System, security bars fitted with quick release mechanisms and other safety related devices are installed in the vehicle.

Because of its size and life-like features, it creates an environment that allows children to learn. This, along with safety examples provided by firefighters provides the knowledge needed to prevent fires, and the steps to follow in the event of a fire situation.

The Kid's Fire Safety House visits every public and private 1st grade classroom during October's Fire Prevention Month. It is a very successful program in reaching young children and reinforcing important lessons like - preparing and practicing a home fire escape plan. - "Plan Your Escape - Know Two Ways Out of Every Room"

This program has been well received throughout the community, and has been quite successful since its inception. Its continued success depends on the active involvement of committed teachers and parents as well as students.

As a side-note, Public Education Officer Michael Lopez reports that "preparing young children to handle an emergency is very rewarding, because the children remember the lesson throughout their life."