



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Fire Services



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To: All Heads of Fire Departments/Fire Districts
All S.A.F.E. Educators

From: Peter J. Ostroskey, State Fire Marshal

Date: January 21, 2020

RE: Viral Teen Video Resulting in Fire Incidents

I wanted to make you aware of a new viral video that involves the unsafe use of electricity and fire. It involves using the plug part of a phone charger, partially inserting it into the wall outlet, and the sliding a penny down the wall onto the exposed prongs. The result is sparks, electrical system damage, and in some cases fire.

We have had two incidents in Massachusetts that we are aware of: one in Holden where a concerned mother sent a photo of a scorched outlet to a news outlet (see photo), and one at a Westford High School, which the Department of Fire Services investigated. The student(s) responsible for starting the fire at the Westford Academy will face charges.

This video is a concern and similar to past viral videos that encourage unsafe behavior. You might reach out to local news outlets, school officials, and parent organizations. Alert them to this challenge, advise them to, not only look for signs of fire play like scorched outlets, but to have conversations about fire and electrical safety with tweens and teenagers. S.A.F.E. educators might reach out to their school partners because teaching why this is dangerous could be a good science lesson.

