



Up In Flames

The Dangers of Smoking in Apartment Buildings

Cigarettes and other smoking materials are the leading cause of residential fire deaths in the United States. These fires can also result in millions of dollars in damaged property and healthcare costs. According to the United States Fire Administration, more attention needs to be given to preventing fires caused by lighted tobacco materials.¹

The Cause of Smoking-Related Fires

- Fires often result when a smoker falls asleep, drops or throws a cigarette away while it's still lit. A dropped cigarette can lie in furniture or bed linens and smolder for up to 30-45 minutes, causing fire or large amounts of smoke.²
- The smoke from a smoldering cigarette contains carbon monoxide and other toxic gases that can cause people to lose consciousness, putting them at greater risk of injury or death from a fire.²

Apartment Buildings and Smoking-Related Fires

- Multi-family dwellings along with one-and two-family homes make up over 90 percent of residential smoking fires.¹

- An estimated 9,000 smoking-related fires in residential buildings occur each year in the United States.

Smoking-Related Fires are Deadly

- About 800 deaths are caused by cigarette-related fires in the United States each year.¹ This is because smoking-related fires happen four times more often than other residential fires. Injuries are also more than twice as likely when cigarettes are the cause.¹
- One quarter (25 percent) of victims who die from smoking-related fires are not the smoker whose cigarettes started the blaze.⁵
- Children and other family members, neighbors, friends, roommates and even passersby can all be killed in these fires.⁶ Firefighters can also be injured or killed while working to put out a cigarette-caused fire.
- Residential smoking fires happen more often at night. Forty percent of those killed in residential smoking fires were asleep, as were 35 percent of those injured.¹

The Cost of a Smoking-Related Fire

- Fires caused by cigarettes result in approximately \$400 million in



property damage and \$4 billion in total economic loss each year in the United States.

A Solution to the Problem: Smoke-Free Policies Reduce the Risk of Fire

- Smoke-free policies in apartments and other multi-family homes reduce the risk of cigarette-related fires, damages, and deaths by eliminating smoking inside the building.

Sources

- 1 U.S. Fire Administration, "Residential Smoking Fires and Causalities," 2005
- 2 Tobacco Control Legal Consortium, "Regulating Cigarettes for Fire Safety," 2007
- 3 MN Fire Marshal, "Fire in Minnesota," 2009
- 4 MN Fire Marshal, "Fire Fatalities," 2009
- 5 Coalition for Fire-Safe Cigarettes, "Fast Facts"
- 6 National Fire Protection Association, "The Smoking-Material Fire Problem," 2006
- 7 WCCO TV, June 21, 2007
- 8 KMSP TV, March 30, 2007



www.livesmokefree.ri.gov