



FIRE-SAFE IN TENNESSEE

State Fire Marshal: Smoking-related Fires Are Preventable

According to the Tennessee Fire Incident Reporting System (TFIRS), 14 percent of the state's fire deaths last year resulted from fires caused by smoking, which made smoking the leading cause of the state's fire fatalities in 2012.

"Putting out a cigarette or other smoking material the right way only takes seconds," State Fire Marshal and Commerce & Insurance Commissioner Julie Mix McPeak says. "Those seconds can mean the difference between a fire-safe home and a home devastated by a tragic fire."

Tennessee is not alone – smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths nationwide. Most fires caused by smoking materials start on beds, furniture or in trash. One-in-four people killed in home fires nationally is not the smoker whose cigarette caused the fire; more than one-third were children of the smokers, and 25 percent were neighbors or friends of the smokers.

Smoking-related fires can be prevented. Smokers and those who live with smokers should utilize the following tips to help make their home safer:

- If you smoke, use only fire-safe cigarettes. They are less likely to cause fires. However, fire-safe does not mean fire-proof. Caution and care must be taken with any lit cigarette.
- To prevent a deadly cigarette fire, you must be alert. You will not be alert if you are sleepy, have taken medicine or drugs that make you drowsy or have consumed alcohol.
- If you smoke, smoke outside.
- Never smoke in bed or in a chair known to make you sleepy.
- Never smoke where medical oxygen is used. Medical oxygen can cause materials to ignite more easily and make fires burn at a faster rate than normal. It can make an existing fire burn faster and hotter.
- Wherever you smoke, use deep, sturdy ashtrays. If ashtrays are not available, use a metal can or pail. Place the ashtrays or metal cans away from anything that can burn, including the arms of sofas or chairs.
- Do not throw out cigarettes into vegetation, potted plants or landscaping, peat moss, dried grasses, mulch, leaves, and other similar items – these can catch fire easily.
- Before you throw out butts and ashes, make sure they are extinguished. Extinguish them in water or sand. Never toss hot cigarette butts or ashes in the trash.
- Before going to bed, check under furniture cushions and around places where people smoke for cigarette butts that may have fallen out of sight.
- Keep cigarettes, lighters, matches and other smoking materials up high, out of the reach of children, or in a locked cabinet.

The Tennessee Health Department offers a free program to help people quit smoking. If you need help breaking your smoking habit, call the Tennessee Tobacco QuitLine at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). For more information, visit <http://health.state.tn.us/tobaccoquitline.htm>.

For more fire safety information, download the State Fire Marshal's Office home fire safety checklist at <http://tn.gov/commerce/sfm/fsk/documents/checklist.pdf>.

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