



FEMA

September 24, 2009

**A Message from the U. S. Fire Administrator about
Smoking Related Fire Fatalities and Fire-Safe Cigarettes**

Smoking is the leading cause of home fire fatalities in the United States despite the fact that the numbers of smokers continue to decline. The victims of the fires are not only the smokers but their children, spouses or partners, and even neighbors or friends. The United States Fire Administration's (USFA) National Fire Data Center reported 2007 estimates for residential fires related to smoking-materials:

- Residential Fires 18,900
- Residential Fire Deaths 595
- Residential Fire Injuries 1,200
- Residential Property Loss \$327 million

A promising effort to diminish the loss of life and property caused by smoking-material fires is the development of the fire-safe cigarette. Technically referred to as reduced ignition propensity cigarettes, they are designed to reduce the probability of a cigarette burning through its wrapper (paper). This minimizes the risk of the cigarette igniting materials if it is accidentally dropped or left on a flammable or combustible surface. Behaviors associated with smoking-material fires, such as falling asleep, impairments from alcohol or drug use, and age emphasize the importance of fire-safe cigarettes.

New York was the first state to adopt fire-safe cigarette legislation in 2004. As of August 31, 2009, an additional twenty-nine states, plus the District of Columbia, require any cigarettes being sold to meet the fire-safe standard. New York reports an estimated 33% reduction in fire fatalities due to smoking-material fires since they started collecting the data. However, it is still too early to see a statistical trend in all states that have adopted the legislation.

The National Fire Protection Association coordinates a fire-safe cigarette support group, the Coalition for Fire-Safe Cigarettes, www.firesafecigarettes.org. Their effort calls for tobacco manufacturers to produce and market only fire-safe cigarettes.

The USFA joins with its national partners to encourage every member of the fire service to support local, state, and Federal initiatives to replace traditional cigarettes with fire-safe cigarettes.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelvin J. Cochran".

Kelvin J. Cochran
Assistant Administrator
U. S. Fire Administration