

Up in Flames: The Dangers of Smoking in Apartment Units

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

The Cause of Smoking-Related Fires

Cigarette-caused fires often result when a smoker drops, abandons, or improperly disposes of a smoldering cigarette. A dropped cigarette can lie in furniture or bed linens and smolder for up to 30-45 minutes, causing fire ignition or large amounts of smoke.²

Smoke from this type of smoldering cigarette contains carbon monoxide and other highly toxic gases that can make people semiconscious or unconscious, putting them at greater risk of injury or death from a fire.²

Smoking materials (cigarettes, lighters, matches, etc.) are the leading cause of home and total fire deaths in the United States.³

In 2010, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 90,800 smoking-material fires in the U.S.⁴

Apartment Buildings and Smoking-Related Fires

An estimated 7,600 smoking-related fires in residential buildings occur each year in the U.S.⁵

Smoking-Related Fires are Deadly

Cigarette-caused residential fires result in 700-900 deaths in the United States per year.¹ The fatality rate due to smoke-related fires is nearly 4 times higher than the overall residential fire rate.¹ Injuries from these types of fires are more than twice as likely.¹

One quarter (25%) of victims of smoking-material fire fatalities are not the smoker whose cigarettes started the fire.⁶ Children of the smoker, spouses/partners, neighbors, friends, parents, siblings, roommates, other relatives, and passersby can all be killed in these fires.⁴ Firefighters can also be injured or killed while working to put out a cigarette-caused fire.

Residential smoking fires that injure are more common at night. Forty percent (40%) of those killed in residential smoking fires were asleep, as were 35% of those injured.¹

The Cost of a Smoking-Related Fire

Property losses from smoking-material fires total hundreds of millions of dollars every year.⁵

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

Smoke-free policies in apartments and other multi-family structures reduce the risk of cigarette-related fires, damages, and deaths by eliminating lighted smoking materials from the interior of the building.

By adding a smoke-free policy, you can help protect against property damage and losses to your business. More importantly, you will also be protecting your tenants and employees.



Photo by Craig J. Orosz/The Lima News

1. U.S. Fire Administration, "Residential Smoking Fires and Casualties," 2005
2. Tobacco Control Legal Consortium, "Regulating Cigarettes for Fire Safety," 2007
3. National Fire Protection Association, "Smoking Material Safety Tips," 2012
4. National Fire Protection Association, "The Smoking-Material Fire Problem," 2012

5. U.S. Department of Homeland Security/U.S. Fire Administration, "Smoking-Related Fires in Residential Buildings (2008-2010)," 2012
6. Coalition for Fire-Safe Cigarettes, "Fast Facts"

Smoke-Free Apartments: Healthier Buildings, Happier Residents, A Smart Investment
www.allencountypublichealth.org

This publication was originally created by the Live Smoke Free program in Minnesota. www.mnsmokefreehousing.org