

Smoking material-related fires

Smoking materials (i.e., cigarettes, cigars, pipes, etc.) are the leading cause of fire deaths in the United States. Roughly one of every four fire deaths in 2001 was attributed to smoking materials.

Facts & figures

- In 2001, there were an estimated 31,200 smoking-material fires in structures, 830 civilian deaths, 1,770 civilian injuries and \$386 million in property damage. Of the fire deaths, 770 occurred in the home.
- In Canada there were 3,800 fires in 1999 associated with smoking materials. These fires caused 120 civilian deaths, 260 civilian injuries and direct property damage of \$58 million Canadian (\$39 million U.S.).
- The most common material first ignited in home smoking material-related fires was trash, followed by mattresses and bedding and upholstered furniture.

Source: NFPA's *The Smoking-Material Fire Problem*, November 2004, by John R. Hall, Jr.

Safety tips

- Encourage smokers to smoke outside.
- Keep smoking materials away from anything that can burn (i.e., mattresses, bedding, upholstered furniture, draperies, etc.).
- Never smoke in bed or when you are drowsy, intoxicated or medicated.
- Use large, deep, non-tip ashtrays to prevent ashes from spilling onto furniture and check them frequently. Do not rest ashtrays on sofas or chairs.
- Completely douse butts and ashes with water before throwing them away as they can smolder in the trash and cause a fire.
- Smoking should not be allowed in a home where oxygen is in use.
- Whenever someone has been smoking in the home, always check on, between and under upholstery and cushions and inside trashcans for butts that may be smoldering.
- When smokers visit your home, ask them to keep smoking materials, lighters and matches with them so young children do not touch them.
- Keep matches and lighters up high, out of children's sight and reach (preferably in a locked cabinet).
- If you smoke, choose fire-safe cigarettes. They are less likely to cause fires.