

NFPA Fact Sheet

Smoking material-related fires

Smoking materials (i.e., cigarettes, cigars, pipes, etc.) are the leading cause of fire deaths and the third leading cause of fire injuries in the United States. Roughly one of every four fire deaths in the 1998 was attributed to smoking materials.

Facts & figures*

- In 1998, there were 140,800 fires associated with smoking materials, resulting in 903 deaths, 2,453 injuries and \$412 million in property damage. Of the fire deaths, 865 occurred in residential properties.
- The leading cause of residential fires associated with smoking materials was abandoned or carelessly disposed of smoking materials.
- The most common material first ignited in residential smoking material-related fires was mattresses and bedding, followed by upholstered furniture.

(*From NFPA's *The U.S. Smoking-Material Fire Problem*, April 2001, by John R. Hall, Jr.)

Safety Tips

- Keep smoking materials away from anything that can burn (i.e., mattresses, bedding, upholstered furniture, draperies, etc.).
- Never smoke in bed when drowsy, medicated or intoxicated as this could lead to falling asleep with a lighted cigarette.
- 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.
- 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).