



Fire safer cigarettes

What's the Issue?

- Cigarettes are the likely cause of one third of fire deaths and most non-fatal injuries in most European countries ¹.
- A survey of 14 member states and Norway carried out by the European Commission found that identified 11,000 fires caused by smoking causing € 13 million of material damage, 1,600 injuries and 520 deaths each year ². In the United States property losses from smoking material fires total hundreds of millions of dollars each year ³.
- Victims are often more likely to be from low income households and include non-smokers, smokers, older people, children as well as adults, and fire-fighters ⁴.

What Should Be Done About It?

- A "fire safer standard" for the manufacture of cigarettes has been introduced in Canada and several US states covering over 25% of the population (California, New York, New Hampshire, Illinois and Vermont). This requires most cigarettes to self-extinguish if not repeatedly smoked - for example if they are dropped or if the smoker goes to sleep. This is usually achieved by making cigarettes with thin bands of paper ("speed bumps") at intervals down the length.
- The cost per cigarette is negligible ⁵ and there is little evidence of change in flavour or toxicity ⁶.
- The European Commission has the power to introduce such a standard across the European Union, under the General Product Safety Directive ⁷. A Committee of officials from all the Member States is now considering whether to do this.

Key Points

- A Fire Research Report for the Department of Communities and Local Government estimates that had the US standard been in force in the UK in 2003, the number of smoking related fires would have fallen by almost two thirds, the number of fatalities from 123 to 45 and the number of non-fatal casualties from 1,416 to 530.
- In Canada, the regulatory impact assessment for RIP cigarettes based on Canadian fire and injury statistics concluded that a fire safety standard for cigarettes would reduce fires by 34% to 68% ⁸.
- Preliminary data from NY reports a drop in fires and deaths caused by smoking materials since the law came into force in June 2004 ⁹.
- The European Union should introduce the existing international standard (ASTM E2187-02b) rather than trying to develop a new standard of its own. This would be quicker to introduce, easier to enforce and reduce the regulatory burden on business.



What You Can Do

If the Commission is to introduce a new fire safer cigarette standard, the proposal will need backing from EU member state governments.

***What is your national Government's position on the issue?
Can you help persuade your Government to take a positive approach to a fire safer standard?***

References:

1. Source Fire Statistics UK 2003.
2. Vogelsang J, European Commission Presentation to Harvard School of Public Health December 2006
3. <http://firesafecigarettes.org/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=86&itemID=1188&URL=Research/Fast%20facts>
4. Source: Fire Deaths in London 1996-2000 London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
5. Vogelsang J, European Commission Presentation to Harvard School of Public Health December 2006
6. Harvard School of Public Health/ American Legacy Foundation. "Fire Safer" Cigarettes. The Effect of the New York State Cigarette Fire Safety Standard on Ignition Propensity, Smoke Toxicity, and the Consumer Market. A Preliminary Report. 24 January, 2005.
7. http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/cons_safe/prod_safe/gpsd/index_en.htm
8. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/tobac-tabac/rias-reir/index_e.html
9. Harvard School of Public Health/ American Legacy Foundation. "Fire Safer" Cigarettes. The Effect of the New York State Cigarette Fire Safety Standard on Ignition Propensity, Smoke Toxicity, and the Consumer Market. A Preliminary Report. 24 January, 2005.



The RIP Coalition is a consortium of concerned organisations in the UK including

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH)	Local Government Association
Action on Smoking and Health Scotland	London Fire Brigade
Action on Smoking and Health Wales	London Regional Public Health Group
Age Concern England	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health	National Heart Forum
Bristol PCT	No Smoking Day
British Burn Association	Northern Action on Smoking and Health
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health	Northwest Action on Smoking and Health
Chief Fire Officers Association	PharmacyHealthLink
Faculty of Public Health	QUIT
Fire Brigades Union	Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation
Fire Officers' Association	Royal Berkshire Fire Service
Fresh Smokefree North East	Royal College of Physicians
Help the Aged	Scottish Cross Party Group on Tobacco Control
Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service	Smoke Free West Midlands
International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) UK Chapter	Smokefree Liverpool
Lambeth Tobacco Alliance	Smokefree London
Leigh Day & Co Solicitors	UK Public Health Association
Liverpool Council	Worcestershire Tobacco Control Alliance
	Yorkshire & the Humber Regional Public Health Group