



Breathe Better in Healthy Homes
A New Hampshire Initiative for Clean Air

A NO-SMOKING POLICY PROTECTS YOUR BUILDINGS FROM FIRE AND COULD LOWER YOUR INSURANCE

Cigarettes and other smoking materials are one of the leading causes of residential fire deaths in New Hampshire and the United States. These fires can also result in millions of dollars in damaged property and healthcare costs. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, more attention needs to be given to preventing fires caused by lighted tobacco materials.

- **The Cause of Smoking-Related Fires**

Cigarette-caused fires often result when a smoker—who may also be impaired by alcohol and may have fallen asleep—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.

A dropped, smoldering cigarette can cause smoke which contains **carbon monoxide and other highly toxic gases** that can render people semiconscious or unconscious, putting them at greater risk of injury or death from a fire.

- **Apartment Buildings and Smoking-Related Fires**

Multi-family dwellings along with one-and two-family homes account for over **90% of residential smoking fires**. Although only 19.8% of all residential fires occur in multi-family buildings, **26.4% of all residential smoking fires occur in multi-family buildings**.

- **Smoking-Related Fires are Deadly**

Cigarette-caused residential fires result in **700-900 deaths** in the United States per year. The fatality rate due to smoking-related fires is **nearly 4 times higher** than the overall residential fire rate; injuries are more than twice as likely.

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

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

9 Cedarwood Dr., Unit 12 | Bedford, NH 03110 | phone 603.669.2411 | fax 603.645.6220 | www.breathenh.org