



Smoking-related fires cause hundreds of deaths, thousands of injuries and millions of dollars in property loss in our nation each year.

Studies by the U.S. Fire Administration show that more than half of alcohol-impaired fire deaths result from fires caused by careless smoking. In Minnesota, careless smoking accounts for 34 percent of residential fire deaths.

Minnesota requires autopsies on all fire fatalities. In a study conducted from 1993 to 1996, there were 255 deaths caused by fire; out of these, 30 percent were found to have positive blood alcohol concentrations. Among this group, 64 percent of the fires were smoking-related.



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# ALCOHOL & SMOKING



## A High-Risk Mixture



## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

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Combining the use of alcohol or other drugs with smoking increases the chance of starting a fire while it decreases the chance of detecting, mitigating and escaping the fire.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

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One thing to do is be conscious of the fire hazards related to the use of alcohol and tobacco. Establish, follow, and enforce a set of rules that will protect your family and yourself. Set a safe example for others.

## DISPOSAL PRECAUTIONS

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Careless disposal of smoking materials and cigarettes is the leading cause of fatal residential fires in the United States. According to the National Fire Protection Association, approximately 250,000 house fires per year are caused by careless disposal of cigarettes or other smoking materials. Nearly 2,000 people lose their lives in these fires.

Large, deep ashtrays are the safest kind to use because there is less risk of a cigarette falling out and starting a fire.

Even when a cigarette appears to be extinguished, there is still a chance that it may be smoldering. When you empty an ashtray, empty it into an empty coffee can and put the airtight lid back on. After 24 hours you can safely dump the can into the trash.

Before you leave a room where people have been smoking, check under cushions. Check for embers, cigarette butts or matches. Make sure they have not been smoldering and remove them at once.

**In Minnesota, careless smoking accounts for 25 percent of all fire fatalities and 34 percent of residential fire deaths.**

## SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

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Never smoke in bed. Even people who don't feel tired can doze off. If you think you'll wake up if the bed catches fire, you're **DEAD** wrong. The toxic gases from burning bedding will put you into a deep sleep — maybe an eternal sleep.

Help to protect vulnerable smokers. When a person's physical ability is impaired, there is a greater chance of clothing catching fire from a cigarette. Keep a watchful eye on elderly and disabled persons who smoke, making sure they follow safety precautions.



Keep ignition devices away from children. Matches and lighters are tools for adults only. Store matches and cigarette lighters up high where young children can't reach them. Teach children to give matches or lighters they find to adults.

## PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

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Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area.

Plan and practice a home escape drill. Keep in mind that young children may not awaken to the sound of a smoke alarm. Make sure your plan includes a way to reach your children in the event of a fire.