



Up in Flames: The Dangers of Smoking in Multi-Unit Housing

Cigarettes and other smoking materials are the leading cause of residential fire deaths in Minnesota 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.¹

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.²
- 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.²

Multi-Unit Housing Buildings and Smoking-Related Fires

- **Over one-quarter (26.4%) of all residential smoking-related fires** occur in multi-family buildings.¹
- There were **52 smoking-related** fires in multi-family dwellings in Minnesota in 2009.³

Smoking-Related Fires are Deadly

- Cigarette-caused residential fires result in **700-900 deaths** in the United States per year.¹ 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.¹
- In 2009 in Minnesota, smoking caused
 - ◊ 29% of all fire fatalities³
 - ◊ 42% of residential fire deaths³
 - ◊ **25% of multi-family fire deaths**⁴
- **One quarter (25%) of victims** of smoking-material fire fatalities are not the smoker whose cigarettes started the fire.⁵ Children of the smoker, spouses/partners, neighbors, friends, parents, siblings, roommates, other relatives, and passersby can all be killed in these fires.⁶ Firefighters can also be injured or killed while working to put out a cigarette-caused fire.



The Cost of a Smoking-Related Fire

- In 2009, the average dollar loss per multi-family smoking-related fire in Minnesota was over **\$7,550 per incident**.³
- A fire caused by careless smoking at an apartment in Burnsville, Minnesota in June 2007, resulted in **\$1.5 million** in building damage and \$800,000 in personal property damage.⁷
- After a cigarette-caused fire in July 2006, an apartment building in Bloomington, Minnesota spent **nine months** rebuilding and renovating an entire building of 78 units. In order to avoid smoking-related fires and costs in the future, **the building re-opened smoke free** in April 2007.⁸

A Solution to the Problem: Smoke-Free Policies Reduce the Risk of Fire

- Smoke-free policies in condominiums, townhomes, and other multi-unit housing buildings reduce the risk of cigarette-related fires, damages, and deaths by eliminating lighted smoking materials from the interior of the building.

¹U.S. Fire Administration, "Residential Smoking Fires and Casualties," 2005

²Tobacco Control Legal Consortium, "Regulating Cigarettes for Fire Safety," 2007

³Minnesota Fire Marshal, "Fire in Minnesota," 2009

⁴Minnesota Fire Marshal, "Fire Fatalities," 2009

⁵Coalition for Fire-Safe Cigarettes, "Fast Facts"

⁶National Fire Protection Association, "The Smoking-Material Fire Problem," 2006

⁷WCCO TV, June 21, 2007

⁸KMSP TV, March 30, 2007