

# Adoption of Fire-Safe Cigarettes by Tobacco Industry May Save Countless Lives

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NAAG President Lawrence Wasden  
Urges Attorneys General to Weigh  
Science and Industry during National  
Energy Summit

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## **Adoption of Fire-Safe Cigarettes by Tobacco Industry May Save Countless Lives**

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States Offer Data Breach Protection

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Salvia Divinorum: Not Your Father?s  
Garden Plant

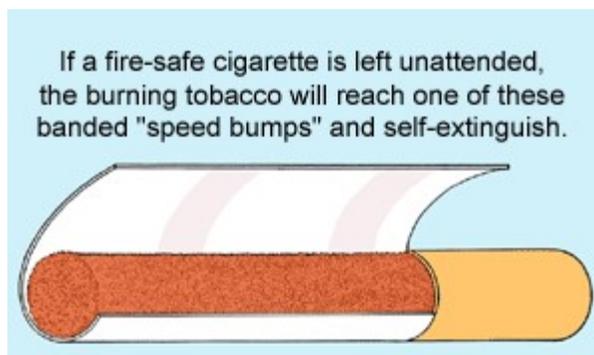
Cigarettes and other lit tobacco products are the number one cause of fire deaths in the U.S., killing nearly 1,000 people and injuring approximately 1,500 Americans each year.

While fires in the U.S. caused by smoking have declined by 75 percent between 1980 and 2005, and U.S. civilian deaths from fires caused by smoking have declined by 59 percent during the same time period, those reductions are in part the result of decreases in the rate of smoking in the United States. Cigarettes are still the leading cause of fire-related deaths in the U.S. More importantly, these smoking-related fires do not discriminate --- killing non-smokers and smokers alike.

One in four smoking-related fire victims were not the smokers whose cigarettes caused the fire. Of those deaths, approximately one-third are the smoker's children. A quarter are neighbors and friends, and another 14 percent are spouses. Furthermore, the elderly are disproportionately affected by these smoking-related fires. The smoking-related fire death-rate for victims age 65 and older is three to four times greater than the death rate for those ages 18-64, yet those over age 65 are half as likely to smoke as their younger counterparts.

Fortunately many of these deaths are preventable. Reduced ignition propensity cigarettes, more commonly known as fire-safe cigarettes, are self-extinguishing cigarettes that are far less likely to start fires when handled carelessly by smokers. Fire-safe cigarettes extinguish themselves when left unattended, making it more difficult for the cigarette to start a fire when dropped on the floor, left in the trash or left

on a piece of furniture. Any cigarette that self-extinguishes under regulated test conditions is considered fire-safe, regardless of design. However, most fire-safe cigarettes are manufactured using a special cigarette wrapper paper that uses bands of thicker paper to act as “speed bumps” to the flame consuming the cigarette. Once the flame on an unattended cigarette reaches one of the paper bands, the cigarette will extinguish.



Picture from the Coalition for Fire-Safe-Cigarettes.

<http://www.firesafecigarettes.org/>



**Fire-Safe Cigarette Testing Apparatus.**

On the left a non-fire safe cigarette burns down. On the right, a self-extinguished fire-safe cigarette. Photo from the Coalition for Fire-Safe-Cigarettes.

<http://www.firesafecigarettes.org/>

Despite recognizing the cost to human life caused by smoking-related fires and long possessing the technology needed to significantly reduce the number of smoking-related fires, the tobacco industry historically opposed the passage of fire-safe laws at the state and federal levels. In the 1980s and 1990s, both Congress and states attempted to pass numerous fire-safe laws. The industry lobbied against the legislative efforts and only laws exploring the feasibility of fire-safe technology passed. In the 1980s, the National Fire Prevention Association predicted that fire-safe cigarettes would eliminate three quarters of smoking-related fire deaths. Based upon this data, if the industry had begun producing fire-safe cigarettes at that time, an estimated 17,000 lives could have been saved.

In 2003, the state of New York passed the first substantive fire-safe cigarettes law. The Act, which went into effect in 2004, prohibits the sale of cigarettes that do not comply with the self-extinguishing standards set out by the statute.

After enactment of New York's groundbreaking law, many states introduced and passed their own fire-safe cigarette bills. The tobacco industry, facing a state groundswell, began to support fire-safe legislation with a goal of ensuring that the fire-safe standards remained consistent across state bills. Philip Morris, the main industry supporter of the bill, obtained a patent for the special paper wrapping that ensures cigarette extinguishment.

Today, 25 states have passed fire-safe cigarette laws, with state laws going into effect on a regular basis. Moreover, at least three states are very actively in the process of passing fire-safe bills. Given this trend, it appears that fire-safe cigarettes will become the standard for cigarettes sold throughout the United States. In fact, major tobacco product manufacturer, Liggett Group LLC, recently announced that all of the domestic cigarettes they manufacture would be voluntarily fire-safe-compliant as of January 2009 --- and such industry action is encouraging.

The states have made great progress in passing fire-safe cigarette legislation thanks

to the perseverance of state legislators, Attorneys General, fire marshals and their staffs. Nevertheless, there is still hard work ahead as states must maintain, enforce and strengthen the existing fire-safe cigarette laws.

*Information and statistics were provided by the Coalition for Fire-Safe-Cigarettes. Visit <http://www.firesafecigarettes.org/> for more information.*



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Gordon MacDonald is the attorney general of New Hampshire.

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