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Smoking-materials fire deaths drop to 30 year low
Fire-safe cigarette laws show early signs of success

April 2, 2012- According to a [recent report](#) released by the [National Fire Protection Association](#) (NFPA), 610 civilian deaths in the United States were attributed to smoking material fires in 2010, a number at or near the all-time-low and well down from the 1980 levels. During 2010 there were an estimated 90,800 smoking material fires resulting in \$663 million in direct property damage.

Several factors, including a decline in smoking and stricter fire resistant standards on mattresses and upholstered furniture have been credited with the decrease in smoking material fire deaths over the last 30 years. The most recent drops in fatalities and injuries, though, owe much to the “fire-safe” cigarette legislation.

In 2003, U.S. states began requiring that all cigarettes sold must be “fire-safe,” that is, have sharply reduced ignition strength (ability to start fires), as determined by ASTM Standards. By 2010, fire-safe cigarette legislation was in effect in 47 states. From 2003 to 2010, the number of civilian deaths in smoking-material fires fell by an average of 21 percent.

2012 is the first year all 50 state laws are effective, and all inventories of pre-standard cigarettes should have sold out. A projection linking the percentage decline in fire deaths to the percentage of smokers covered suggests that when smoking material fire death numbers are analyzed for the year 2012, the reduction in civilian deaths will reach roughly 30 percent.

According to Lorraine Carli, NFPA's vice president of Communications, "The adoption of fire-safe cigarette legislation is proving to be a giant step forward in reducing the leading cause of home fire deaths."

"NFPA is very encouraged by these numbers, which show the requirements are having the intended consequences," said Carli. "It is clear that our efforts have already made an impact on public safety and will continue to provide further progress in the years to come."

Other key findings in this report show:

- Older adults are at the highest risk of death or injury from home smoking-material fires, even though they are less likely to smoke than younger adults.
- One fatal victim in four (24 percent) of home smoking-material fires was not the smoker whose cigarette started the fire.
- Sleeping is the primary human factor contributing to ignition cited for one-third (32 percent) of home smoking-material fire deaths.
- As with virtually all types of fires, there are many steps that people can take to prevent smoking-material fires. NFPA has developed the following safety tips focusing on safe storage and disposal of cigarettes:
 - Whenever you smoke, use deep, wide, sturdy ashtrays.
 - Ashtrays should be set on something sturdy and hard to ignite, like an end table.
 - Before you throw out butts and ashes, make sure they are out. Dowsing them in water or sand is the best way to do this.
 - Check under furniture cushions and other places people smoke for cigarette butts that may have fallen out of sight.

About the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

NFPA is a worldwide leader in fire, electrical, building, and life safety. The mission of the international nonprofit organization founded in 1896 is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.