



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

Protecting Our Community

COMMUNITY INFORMATION BULLETIN NO. 22

SMOKING

More people die in fires caused by smoking than any other cause. Smokers who are older, and those with impaired mobility, are at the greater risk from fire and from potentially setting fire to their clothing, bedding or the chair in which they are sitting, if they don't take enough care.

Fires caused by smoking materials are preventable. By following this guidance, smokers, family members, carers and friends of vulnerable smokers could save their own, or someone else's life:

- Most related deaths occur in the home - if smoking, smoke outside;
- Use a deep, sturdy ashtray and keep cigarettes away from any materials that could catch fire;
- Never leave a burning cigarette unattended;
- Before disposing of cigarette butts, make sure they are completely extinguished; wet them thoroughly before placing in an outside bin;
- Don't smoke if you are feeling drowsy or if you have consumed alcohol;
- Never smoke in bed; and
- Keep lighters, matches and smoking materials out of reach of children.

Follow this guidance to help reduce the risk to older people, those with impaired mobility or who have other health issues:

- Assess the risk to each person by looking for danger signs such as burns or scorch marks and if identified, implement control measures;
- If practical, keep smokers supervised or visible at all times;
- Whenever possible, it is always safer for someone else to light their cigarette;
- Encourage smokers to cover their lap with a smoking apron or fire retardant cover;
- Some clothing materials, particularly if loose fitting such as nylon, will ignite much more easily than others, such as cotton or wool; eliminate flammable clothing where possible;
- Avoid smoking in bed; if not practical, consider flame retardant night wear and bedding;
- Smoking on an airflow mattress should be avoided; use fire resistant bedding if this is not possible;
- Never smoke near to or whilst using oxygen therapy equipment; increased oxygen can cause materials to ignite very easily and then burn much faster and hotter; and
- If patients are being treated with paraffin-based skin emollients that are covered by a dressing or clothing, there is a danger that smoking or using a naked flame could cause dressings or clothing to ignite. Emollients soak into fabric and can become a fire hazard. Advise patients not to smoke or be near any naked flame and ensure that clothing and bedding is changed regularly, preferably daily.

If clothing catches fire - take immediate action. The principles of STOP, DROP and ROLL are simple;

- STOP, do not run;
- DROP to the floor in the prone position and cover your face with your hands to protect it; and
- ROLL over and over to smother the fire; don't stop until the flames are extinguished.

If you are near someone whose clothing catches fire, you can also use a blanket or a rug to smother the flames. Cool any burns with running water and seek medical attention immediately.

For further information phone NIFRS HQ 028 9266 4221 or visit www.nifrs.org   #STOPfire