



Dangers of Smoking - Nursing Home Fire

A fatal fire which occurred in a nursing home in 2012 was caused by smoking.

The incident involved an elderly resident of the nursing home who was smoking in the garden. She had refused to dress, was still in her night attire with a blanket over her legs and had asked a care worker to fetch her a drink. While the care worker was away, she attempted to light a cigarette with a match which she dropped into her lap. The match caused a fire resulting in severe burns. Despite initial treatment from paramedics and subsequently at Hospital, she died later that evening.

At the Coroner's inquest it was evidenced that if a fire protective apron or smock could have been provided to be worn or draped over the smoker, such an incident would have been avoided. The match or lit cigarette would have burnt out without damage to the clothing or person.

Safety Advice

It is well known that the safest action would be to stop smoking.
For help to stop smoking visit the NHS Smokefree website: [Smokefree](#)

For smokers not ready to kick the habit, it is important to follow these simple precautions to help prevent a fire and reduce the risks:

- Where possible, smoke in the company of others.
- Ensure there is an ashtray within easy reach. Use a proper, heavy ashtray that can't tip over easily and is made of a material that won't burn.
- Make sure all your cigarettes are fully extinguished.
- Only smoke fire safe Reduced Ignition Propensity (RIP) cigarettes or hand rolled tobacco. Since November 2011 all cigarettes sold in Europe must conform to RIP standards.
- Try not to smoke when you are tired.
- Try to avoid wearing loose fitting clothing. Some clothing fabrics are more fire retardant than others.
- Consider placing a fire retardant cover over the lap or wearing a smoking apron (Suppliers can be found via the internet).
- Consider using fire retardant bed covers (Suppliers can be found via the internet).
- Ensure you have a working smoke alarm and test it weekly.

Quite often there can be signs of near-misses. These could include used matches in and around where the person regularly smokes and burn or scorch marks on clothing, bedding, upholstery and carpets.

If you are a Carer or have concerns over a vulnerable smoker please contact your local Fire Safety Department who will be able to give advice on fire safety measures to help protect the individual.

More Advice: [NO BUTTS! Smokers take extra care](#)