



Health

NEW ZEALAND

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PROPOSED CIGARETTE FIRE SAFETY POLICY

Aim: To regulate the cigarette so it self-extinguishes when discarded, and so prevent fatal fires.



New Zealand Herald 31 October 2002

Current government policy

- Government currently lacks any action policy in this area.
- After a private members bill (from fire fighter MP Grant Gillon) a government administrative committee several years back referred this issue to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs.
- However the issue has fallen between ministries and neither is currently doing anything.
- The Ministry of Health, which administers the Smoke-free Environments Regulations, has the power to regulate the cigarette to fix the problem. (as in New York State 2004 and in Canada from October 2005).

Cause of problem

Manufactured cigarettes alone among tobacco products are designed (by the cigarette maker) to burn full length – and thus cause fires. Yet we polled smokers and found that they do not object to manufactured cigarettes that self-extinguish – hand rolled cigarettes self-extinguish and this is accepted, and smokers are aware of the need to prevent cigarette fires.

Precise nature of the problem.

Cigarette paper used to wrap manufactured cigarettes is impregnated with potassium citrate, to ensure the cigarette burns full length. Hand rolling cigarette paper does not contain citrate and if used to wrap manufactured cigarettes, the cigarette self extinguishes very quickly and does not burn full length. Similarly, hand rolled cigarettes do not burn full length. See under firesafepubs.htm

Why a policy is needed

- Every year several people die from fires started by discarded cigarettes. Others suffer disfiguring and painful burns. Often these are children. Cigarette fires are particularly dangerous, often occurring while people are asleep. Smoke alarms are insufficient – five were functioning in the house shown above.
- **Power to fix the problem** The Ministry of Health already has powers (Smoke-free Environments Act 1990, section 31, as amended 1997) to ban or reduce the use of harmful constituents in cigarettes and their smoke.

Proposed policy

- The Ministry of Health can pass regulations now to ban the use of fire accelerants in cigarette paper, using its current powers.
- If this is not enough, Ministry of Health can go back to Parliament at the next opportunity, to obtain an amendment to the Smoke-free Environments Act to specifically require all cigarettes to self-extinguish and not burn full length - as is already the case with hand rolled cigarettes.

Have legislators and the Ministry been informed? Yes.

- Health New Zealand made representations to the Ministry of Health, the Health Select Committee, and the Ministry's 2004-5 regulatory review. ASH has made representations to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs.
- The NZ Fire Service has run advertising on television in support of smoke alarms, but in the case illustrated, five fire alarms were in place and functioning.
- Has the Fire Commission been informed? Yes ASH wrote to them in 2003.

What are other countries doing?

2004 New York State regulated to make cigarettes self extinguish.

2005 Canada's regulation gazetted June 2005 makes cigarettes self-extinguish from October 2005.

ACTION POINTS

- Write now to the Associate Minister of Health Hon Damien O'Connor, Parliament Buildings, Wellington, the Minister responsible for tobacco control, whether he has asked the Ministry of Health to develop a policy to prevent these fires by regulation, to make all cigarettes self-extinguish once discarded.
- Write to the Ministry of Health is drawing up regulations in 2005. Ask them, will they include a few extra lines to prevent these needless deaths and injuries?

IF NEW YORK AND CANADA CAN REGULATE, SO CAN NEW ZEALAND.

Update May 2006.

Canada. Regulations came into force 1 October 2005, based on the New York law.

United States

(In the absence of congressional action, due to pro-tobacco industry influence)

Since New York passed the nation's first "fire-safe" cigarette requirement, many states have considered similar laws :

Alabama: Bill introduced, died without a final vote at session's end.

Alaska: Bill introduced, awaits final votes.

California: Fire-safe cigarette law passed, effective Jan. 1, 2007.

Delaware: Legislature directed state fire marshal to study need for such a law.

Georgia: Bill introduced, died without a final vote at session's end.

Hawaii: Bills in House and Senate await committee action before a vote.

Illinois: Bill passed, awaits governor's signature.

Maine: Bill introduced, died without a vote at session's end.

Maryland: Bill passed the House, died without a Senate vote at session's end.

Massachusetts: Bill introduced, no final vote scheduled.

Minnesota: Bill introduced, awaits committee action. No final vote scheduled.

New Hampshire: Bill passed the Senate, awaits House vote.

New Jersey: Bill introduced, awaits committee votes. No final vote scheduled.

New York. Law in effect since 2004.

Pennsylvania: Bill introduced, no final vote scheduled.

Rhode Island: Bill introduced, awaits committee action. No final vote scheduled.

Vermont: Fire-safe cigarette law took effect May 1.

Washington: Bill introduced, died without a vote at session's end.

Wisconsin: Bill introduced, awaits committee action. No final vote scheduled.

- Peter Eisler. States target cigarette fire risks. USA Today www.usatoday.com 9 May 2006.

