



The Time is now™

## **MEDIA FAQ**

### **How did this proposal come about?**

In the late 1970's, Congressman Joseph Moakley (D-MA) championed the cause for a national standard that required cigarettes to adhere to basic fire safety standards. After his death, members of congress vowed to pass federal legislation to honor Congressman Moakley. After years of no legislation, individuals involved in fire and life safety decided to pick up where Congressman Moakley left off.

In recent years, informal coalitions of the fire service, safety organizations, medical and public health practitioners, consumers, advocates for people with disabilities, and others have worked on this issue. In 2006, the "Coalition for Fire Safe Cigarettes™" was formed, with the National Fire Protection Association as the lead organization. To date, more than 60 fire and life safety organizations have signed on as members to support the effort. The mission of the Coalition for Fire-Safe Cigarettes is to save lives, prevent injuries and devastation from cigarette-ignited fires. In doing so, the Coalition is calling on cigarette manufacturers to immediately produce and market only cigarettes that adhere to an established standard test method. Furthermore, the Coalition hopes that these standards for fire-safe cigarettes are required in every state in the country.

North Carolina is not immune to the tragedies caused by cigarette-ignited fires. Several individuals and organizations recognize that fact and decided to come together as part of the North Carolina Coalition for Fire-Safe Cigarettes. The North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center, housed at UNC Hospitals, serves as the lead organization. Currently, 14 states and Canada have adopted the fire-safe cigarette standard. Cigarette manufacturers are currently producing fire-safe cigarettes here in North Carolina and shipping them to states that have enacted legislation (approximately 34% of the national population). The citizens of North Carolina deserve to have the same level of protection and to benefit by a reduction in cigarette-related fires and injuries.

### **How do Fire-Safe Cigarettes work? What makes them Fire-Safe?**

While no cigarette will totally eliminate fires, a fire-safe cigarette has a reduced propensity to burn when left unattended. Fire-safe technology used by some cigarette manufacturers makes the paper thicker in places to act as "speed bumps" to slow down a burning cigarette. If a fire-safe cigarette is left unattended, the burning tobacco will reach a "speed bump" and self extinguish.

### **How well does it work?**

Fire-safe cigarettes must meet an established cigarette safety performance standard (based on ASTM E2187 Standard Test Method for Measuring the Ignition Strength of Cigarettes). The regulation requires that no more than 25% of 40 cigarettes tested, burn its full length when placed on 10 layers of standard filter paper.

### **Is it truly effective?**

All cigarettes have a potential to ignite fires, but the use of “Fire-safe” technology provides a tremendous reduction in those risks. A fire-safe cigarette cuts off the burning before most cigarettes are able to ignite things like furniture or bedding material. Conventional cigarettes may fall onto upholstered furniture or bedding and smolder for quite sometime before igniting into a full open flame.

### **Is there any scientific data that backs this up?**

Research in New York State shows no decline in cigarette sales with the introduction of fire-safe cigarettes, however, cigarette-fire fatalities were reported to have declined in the state by a third in 2004 when the law was in place for short period of time.

NFPA (NFPA Fire Analysis Data 1985) research in the mid-1980's predicted that fire-safe cigarettes would eliminate three out of four cigarettes fire deaths. Had fire-safe cigarettes become universal then, approximately 15,000 lives could have been saved.

### **Is there any organized opposition to the fire-safe cigarette?**

There is no known organized opposition to this endeavor.

### **What is the reaction of the tobacco industry to the proposal?**

The three major tobacco producers have agreed to manufacture fire-safe cigarettes as warranted by each state which adopts this legislation (which is currently 34% of the US population and the entire nation of Canada).

### **How many people have been killed or injured each year in fires in NC because of cigarettes?**

The use of fire-safe cigarettes could prevent an estimated 50-60 deaths from fires each year in North Carolina (based on NFIRS reporting data). This is equivalent to saving the lives of occupants from five school buses over the next five years. It is nearly impossible to track the specific number of injuries associated with cigarette-related fires for many reasons; medical coding, hospital admission tracking and submission of data. For example, medical record may list the individual as being injured in a house fire, however, not list the cause of the fire.

**How would this change with Fire-Safe Cigarettes? How can you be sure?**

Again, studies conducted in New York State shortly after introduction Fire-Safe Cigarettes revealed a one third decline in cigarette-related fire deaths. And a NFPA (NFPA Fire Analysis Data, 1985) study also predicts a dramatic reduction injuries should such legislation be adopted.

**Who's on board with this idea?**

A number of state organizations and legislators support this effort (see website). Each realizing the importance of protecting the people of North Carolina. The legislation does not affect the growing, selling or use of tobacco. It is an attempt to make smoking safer so that injuries, deaths and economics are reduced.

**What can a smoker expect from these cigarettes...is there a taste difference?**

Smokers reported that the cigarettes smoke (i.e. taste) the same but when they lay the cigarette in the ashtray for a few minutes the cigarette will extinguish and will need to be relit.

For further information, please contact:

Ernest J. Grant, RN, MSN

North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center

UNC Hospitals

(919) 966-2381

(919) 966-5732

[egrant@unch.unc.edu](mailto:egrant@unch.unc.edu)