

# Smoking and Home Fire Safety

**Smoking is a leading cause of house fire deaths in Australia, with many fires starting due to unsafe smoking behaviours.**

**If you are a smoker, Victorian fire services recommend you take the below actions to minimise your risk of starting a house fire.**

**Quitting smoking is the safest option from a health and a fire safety perspective. However, if you are going to continue to smoke, here are some ways you can minimise your fire risk.**



## **Victorian fire services recommend**

- If you can, smoke outside the home in a single location.
- If smoking occurs in the home, there should be a smoke alarm in every room.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Don't smoke when affected by alcohol, drugs or medications that may cause drowsiness.
- Use heavy, high-sided, non-combustible ashtrays to dispose of cigarette butts. Pour some water on the ash and butts to make sure they're out.
- "Stick it don't flick it" – never flick cigarette butts, either inside or outside.
- Never leave a lit cigarette unattended and butt out your cigarette before you walk away.
- Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of reach of children.

## **Smoking in bed**

Smoking in bed is the leading cause of smoking-related fire deaths. Smoking in bed is dangerous because of the risk of falling asleep with a lit cigarette, which can easily set fire to bedding.

## **Smoking when affected by alcohol, drugs or medications**

Smoking when affected by alcohol, drugs or medications that may cause drowsiness is dangerous because this can lead to a loss of coordination and poor decision-making. It is safest not to smoke while affected by alcohol, drugs or medications. The next safest option is to smoke outside.

## **Smoking and medical oxygen**

Smoking where medical oxygen is used is dangerous. Fires can start more easily and may burn faster. People who use medical oxygen often have health conditions that may make them slower to recognise and respond if a fire does start.

## **Safer cigarette disposal**

Fires commonly start from improperly discarded cigarettes. Unsafe cigarette disposal includes butting out cigarettes into flammable containers such as items made of paper, plastic or wood. Flicked butts have caused large fires in high-rise apartment buildings as well as major bushfires. Victorian fire services' key message is "stick it, don't flick it".

A heavy, high-sided ashtray made from glass or metal is the safest way to dispose of cigarette butts. An empty glass or aluminium drink container is a safe alternative.

Before emptying an ashtray into the bin, ensure all cigarettes and ash have been extinguished. This can be done by pouring some water on the ash.

## **Child fire safety**

Children in homes where people smoke may be more at risk from fire. Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of reach of children



## **Smoke alarms**

All homes in Victoria must have a working smoke alarm. If smoking occurs in the home, there should be a smoke alarm in every room where smoking may occur. Victorian fire services recommend smoke alarms connected to 240-volt mains power with a 10-year battery backup or alarms powered by a 10-year, long-life battery. When more than one smoke alarm is installed in a home, they should be interconnected so that when any alarm activates, all smoke alarms will sound.

