

What is a fire-safe cigarette?

A fire-safe cigarette has a reduced propensity to burn when left unattended. The most common fire-safe technology used by cigarette manufacturers is to wrap cigarettes with two or three thin bands of less-porous paper that act as “speed bumps” to slow down a burning cigarette. If a fire-safe cigarette is left unattended, the burning tobacco will reach one of these speed bumps and self-extinguish.

Fire-safe cigarettes meet an established cigarette fire safety performance standard (based on [ASTM E2187, Standard Test Method for Measuring the Ignition Strength of Cigarettes](#)).

Fire-safe cigarettes save lives

The good news is that improved standards for cigarette-resistant materials in furniture and mattresses, and public education have all helped cut down the number of fires caused by smoking materials and have saved many lives. The bad news is that 700 to 900 people still die each year due to cigarette-ignited fires. And the fact remains: smoking materials are the #1 cause of fire deaths in the United States.

There is no doubt that fire-safe cigarettes will save hundreds of lives each year. Deaths caused by cigarette fires have [declined dramatically in New York State](#) in the first few months that fire-safe cigarettes were mandated there in 2004. The use of cigarettes with a proven, reduced propensity to ignite other materials **will** save lives and offer the best opportunity to achieve the next big leap forward in fire protection.

Is it possible for a “fire-safe” cigarette to ignite furniture or bedding?

All cigarettes have the *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 time before most cigarettes are able to ignite things like furniture or bedding material.

Isn't the real issue the need to educate people about using cigarettes in a responsible way?

Actually, the real issue is that cigarettes are the leading cause of home fire fatalities every year. Fires started by cigarettes kill smokers and non-smokers alike. Cigarette fires also burn and injure thousands of people, while causing millions of dollars in property losses. But, we have the opportunity to prevent those horrible situations through the use of fire-safe cigarettes.

With any fire problem, you can and should try to change the heat source (the cigarette), the items ignited (for example, mattress, couch), and the behavior that brings them together (that is, the smoker's behavior). And all of these strategies are being actively pursued. The reality is that without changing the cigarettes, there will still be hundreds of needless cigarette-fire deaths every

If a fire-safe cigarette is left unattended, the burning tobacco will reach one of these banded "speed bumps" and self-extinguish.

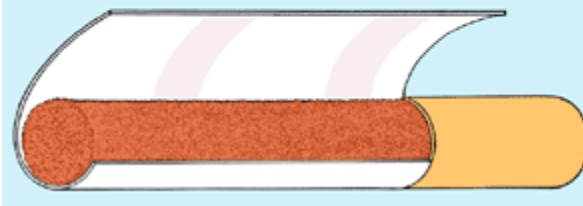
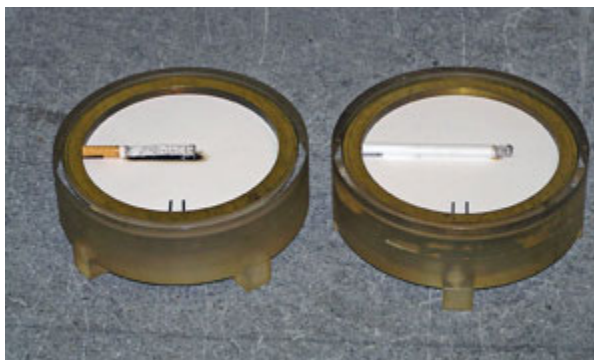


Illustration: John Roman



Cigarette regulations adopted in New York, California, and Vermont require that no more than 25 percent of 40 cigarettes tested burn their full length when placed on 10 layers of standard filter paper. The established cigarette fire safety performance standard is based on [ASTM E2187, Standard Test Method for Measuring the Ignition Strength of Cigarettes](#). Photo: National Institute of Standards and Technology. [See larger image.](#)

