

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

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STATEMENT OF
FIRE CHIEF RAYFIELD ALFRED
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FIRE DEPARTMENT
REPRESENTING
THE
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS
BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND
COMPETITIVENESS

REGARDING

THE FIRE SAFE CIGARETTE
MAY 16, 1990
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Good morning Chairman Walgren, I am Fire Chief Rayfield Alfred, of the Washington, DC, Fire Department. I am pleased to testify before this committee on behalf of Chief Jim Estepp, president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), concerning the fire safe cigarette issue. The IAFC is the professional membership association representing nearly 10,000 career and volunteer chief fire officers and leaders who are responsible for the delivery of fire protection and emergency medical services in United States and internationally.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to preface my remarks by recognizing you and the other members of this subcommittee for your leadership in conducting these very important hearings. I would also like to recognize the efforts of Congressmen Boucher and Moakley for their leadership in moving this issue forward.

It has been well documented over the years by both the U.S. Fire Administration and the National Fire Protection Association that a significant cause of fires in the United States is the misuse and careless use of smoking materials. The facts speak for themselves. The data provided by the U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Incident Reporting System and the National Fire Protection Association show that in 1987 and 1988, the leading cause of civilian fire deaths nationwide was the misuse of smoking materials.

Smoking materials are also the second leading cause of civilian injuries nationwide, and a contributing factor with regard to property loss. The scenarios typically include a burning cigarette finding its way into a trash container, or a cigarette left to smoulder on an upholstered couch or chair.

As you know, in 1984 Congress established a Technical Study Group (TSG) to examine the feasibility of producing a cigarette that will "self-extinguish" if not inhaled after a short period of time. The International Association of Fire Chiefs was a member of that panel. After about two and one-half years of work, the TSG issued a final report, which, among several

recommendations, stated that "... it is technically feasible and may be commercially feasible to develop cigarettes that will have a significantly reduced propensity to ignite upholstered furniture and mattresses." It is of our opinion, and the opinion of many other fire safety professionals, that such a product will be a major step in the reduction in fires due to the use of smoking materials.

Much discussion has ensued concerning two issues; 1) the need for further study of this issue, and 2) the ability to establish criteria which the proposed "fire safe cigarette" must meet. According to the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST), formerly the National Bureau of Standard (NBS), a fire safety criteria for cigarettes could be developed in one year. It has also been suggested that an additional panel is necessary and at least three years are needed for additional study. We feel that this is simply an unnecessary delay. We feel the procedures suggested in H.R. 293, as proposed by Congressman Moakley, is the most appropriate course of action. This process takes into account the findings of the Technical Study Group on Cigarette and Little Cigar Fire Safety, without delaying the implementation with additional panels.

We feel that ~~extensive~~ studies into the issue of potential changes in toxicity of new cigarette products with less propensity for ignition are not warranted. Cigarettes are already toxic. In fact, recent reports concerning passive smoking suggest that non-smokers who are exposed to the smoke of others are now at greater risk than in findings of earlier studies.

According to the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute for Standards and Technology was able to produce a cigarette with low ignition characteristics which did not have appreciably different toxicities in tar, nicotine and carbon monoxides. Our point is that although toxicity testing must be part of the process, it should not pose unnecessary delay.

It must be recognized that a great deal of analysis has been conducted, at considerable cost, with regard to the development of a reduced ignition propensity cigarette. The findings are clear, the development of a less fire prone or "fire safe" cigarette is feasible. The standards for such a product

can be developed in reasonable amount of time and, it is imperative that the criteria for such a cigarette and little cigar be established without delay.

We are pleased that there is a general concensus among fire service professionals, fire safety experts and in this Congress about the need for a fire safe cigarette. We applaud Representative's Boucher and Moakley for their leadership in advancing these initiatives. It is now time to begin the process of moving a fire safe cigarette from the laboratory into the environment where it can make a difference. We urge this subcommittee to move as swiftly as possible toward that end. I appreciate the opportunity to testify and will be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

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