

FIRE-SAFE CIGARETTE ACT OF 1998
AB 2200

BACKGROUND:

Most Americans recognize that smoking is one of the leading causes of preventable deaths nationwide. Yet many do not realize that cigarettes are the leading cause of fire deaths in America today. In fact, over 1,000 Americans are killed in cigarette related fires every year. In addition to fire fatalities and thousands of other serious burn injuries, cigarette fires cause hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage every year in this country. Here in California, the most recent statistics show that in just one year there were over 100,000 cigarette fires that caused nearly \$15 million dollars in property damage.

The individuals most vulnerable to cigarette fires are children and seniors. According to one study, one-third of those killed and injured in cigarette fires are innocent victims: children and adults trapped in a fire caused by someone else's dropped cigarette. Such was the case on December 16, 1997, when a cigarette is suspected to have started a fire that ultimately killed a 42 year old woman and five young children [all of whom were under the age of 9] in the Bayview/Hunter's Point area of San Francisco. The smoker who started the fire escaped unhurt.

The tobacco industry has the ability to change the design of their products to prevent cigarette fires, but have chosen not to actively market and sell those products. There are currently over 100 patents worldwide to make cigarettes burn cooler or extinguish when not being smoked for a period of time. In 1984, President Reagan signed the Cigarette Safety Act that created a 15-member Technical Study Group to determine the technical and economic feasibility of fire-safe cigarettes. That study group, which included members from the tobacco industry, unanimously endorsed a report to Congress concluding that not only were fire-safe cigarettes technically feasible, but also may be commercially feasible. Since that report was issued, studies by the tobacco industry have shown fire-safe cigarettes can be designed without any significant difference in taste.

BILL COMPONENTS:

1. Would require the State Fire Marshal by June 1, 1999, to adopt fire safety standards for cigarettes sold, offered for sale, or manufactured in California to limit the risk that the cigarette will ignite upholstered furniture and mattresses;
2. Would require by January 1, 2000 any entity engaged in the manufacture of cigarettes to certify in writing to the State Fire Marshal, prior to any sale of its products in California, that the cigarette meets the Fire Marshal's performance standards; and
3. Would prohibit on and after January 1, 2000 the manufacture, sale, or distribution of any cigarette that does not comply with the Fire Marshal's performance standards.

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