

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

John J. Barthelmes, Commissioner



Division of Fire Safety
OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL
J. William Degnan, State Fire Marshal



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Fire Marshal J. William Degnan

N.H. State Fire Marshal's Office

New Hampshire State Fire Marshal J. William Degnan encourages anyone living in a home where medical oxygen is used to take the necessary safety precautions.

Portable medical oxygen in the home has grown over the past decade. Medical oxygen adds a higher percentage of oxygen to the air a patient uses to breath. Fire needs oxygen to burn. When more oxygen is in the air, it saturates fabric covered furniture, clothing, hair, and bedding, making it easier for a fire to start and spread. Any fire that starts will burn hotter and faster. According to the National Fire Protection Association, smoking materials is the leading heat source resulting in medical oxygen related fires, injuries, and deaths.

There have been seven fatalities in New Hampshire since March 2005 caused by ignitions associated with home medical oxygen.

The National Fire Protection Association suggests that people using home medical oxygen and those associated with its use keep the following safety tips in mind to avoid fires and injuries:

- Post "No Smoking" and "No Open Flames" signs in and outside the home to remind people not to smoke.
- Never smoke in a home where oxygen is used.
- Candles, matches, wood stoves and even sparking toys, can be ignition sources and should not be used when oxygen is in use.
- Body oil, hand lotion and items containing oil and grease can easily ignite. Keep oil and grease away from the oxygen.
- Never use aerosol sprays containing combustible materials near the oxygen.
- People who may have difficulty escaping a fire should have a phone near their bed or chair.

Fire Marshal Degnan urges everyone to have working smoke alarms and to test them at least monthly. Have a home fire escape plan with two ways out of every room and an outside meeting place. Remember to practice the plan at least twice a year.