

Bill Would Require Smokeless Cigarettes

By April M. Washington, Rocky Mountain News
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Where there is no smoke, there is no fire.

That's why an Aurora state senator plans to introduce a bill that would require all cigarettes sold in Colorado to be self-extinguishing.

Although they're called smokeless cigarettes, in reality they are cigarettes that stop burning if smokers stop puffing.

Bob Hagedorn, D-Aurora, wants Colorado to join 22 other states that have passed legislation requiring the sale of such cigarettes to prevent the leading cause of house fire deaths.

"My mom and dad smoked so I know how people easily fall asleep with a cigarette still smoldering," Hagedorn said Wednesday. "I became intrigued with the technology last summer. It has the tremendous potential of saving lives."

Phillip Morris USA, one the nation's largest manufactures of tobacco products, hasn't actively opposed the passage of such state laws.

Company spokesman, Bill Phelps, said Phillip Morris supports federal legislation that would establish uniform standards requiring the sale of fire-safe cigarettes rather than a patchwork of state laws that may be difficult to implement and enforce.

"This would ensure that all manufactures and importers - regardless of size and location - would be required to satisfy the same standard," the company says on its Web site.

The National Fire Protection Association is pushing legislation nationwide to require the sale of fire-safe cigarettes.

In 2004, New York became the first state to enact such a law.

Last year alone, 16 states, including Utah, Oregon, California, Illinois, Massachusetts and Kentucky, passed laws requiring the sale of fire-safe cigarettes.

"This is foremost a public safety issue," said Lorraine Carli, vice president of the association. "Cigarettes are the leading cause of house fire deaths in the U.S. They kill on average 700 to 900 people each year."

Nationwide, nearly half the victims in fatal house fires were sleeping, said Kevin Klein, director of the Colorado Division of Fire Safety. "The technology is there to utilize," he said. "It decreases the probability of a fire started by a cigarette from occurring."