

Subject: Smoking at State and Nonprofit Homes

November 2011

Approximately 1,000 people die every year in their homes from fires caused by cigarettes and other smoking materials. Almost 75% of fires caused by smoking are the result of a cigarette being abandoned or carelessly disposed of. In other words, someone was not paying attention—and not being careful.

OPWDD has standardized fire safety measures for all state and nonprofit homes, including providing clear expectations for smoking. Please visit <http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/wt/memoranda/ADM-2011-02.pdf> for more information.

Along with state homes, **all providers should have a clearly articulated smoking policy and a designated smoking area for each site.** Smoking policies apply to everyone who may be at the program site, including staff, individuals, and visitors. This policy should be easily accessible and enforced by staff. Smoking policies should address the following required practices:

- No smoking is allowed inside any program or office site operated, certified or funded by OPWDD, even if only on an occasional basis.
- Smoking is allowed outdoors on the grounds where programs are located, but only in the designated smoking area. The designated smoking area must be at least 30 feet away from the building. A distance of 50 feet is considered a best practice and should be followed, where feasible.
- If there is no available spot that can be designated which is 30 feet away from the building, then the designated area should be as far from the building as is practical while still remaining on the property.
- Smoking remnant receptacles, specifically designed for this purpose, must be available near the designated smoking area to dispose of cigarette butts.
- There must be a regular schedule to ensure these receptacles are emptied.
- Staff must be instructed not to put items such as coffee cups, empty cigarette packs or other trash in the receptacle that is intended solely for cigarette butts.

Smoking policies should be reinforced frequently and supervisors should always demonstrate best practices. When visiting a program site, supervisors should be observant for signs that the smoking policy has not been followed, such as cigarette butts on the ground near entryways or ash trays on decks or porches. **All staff must be ever vigilant—it just takes one small mistake to cause a tragedy.**

If you have any questions related to smoking policies, appropriate remnant receptacles, or other fire safety questions, please contact safety.security@opwdd.ny.gov. For more information about Health and Safety Alerts, please visit <http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/alerts/index.jsp>.