



Smoking fires in hotels and motels

Hotels and Motels account for 44% of residential structure fires excluding home fires, 41% of associated civilian deaths, 52% of associated civilian injuries, and 44% of associated direct property damage.

Smoking-related fires, fires involving implements used to light smoking materials, and incendiary and suspicious fires account for more than one of every three hotel and motel fires, four of every five civilian deaths and half of associated civilian injuries. About 3/5 of reported structure fires occurred in properties with working smoke alarms.

The Fire Beater™ Cradle was first introduced to the hospitality industry at the 2000 International Hotel/Motel and Restaurant Show (IH/M+RS) in New York City. The Cradle was a finalist in the Editor's Choice for best new product category.

Eleven editors' of hospitality magazines throughout North America participate in this selection. Hotels/Motels allocate 25 to 40 percent of their rooms to smokers. All of these rooms are a moment's distraction away from customer death or injury. When you reserve your next hotel/motel stay, ask the establishment what measure's they are presently taking to combat the smoking-related fire problem. If they haven't yet equipped themselves with the Fire Beater™ Cradle, you should at least consider taking yours along on your trip.

Excerpt from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) special data information package on fatal fires-hotels and motel buildings: [Investigation report on the Westcase Hilton Hotel \(Houston, Texas\) Fire:](#)

The fire at the Westcase Hilton, like other recent severe hotel fires, was a modern, recently completed (or expanded) fire-resistive structure with a number of built-in fire protection features. Yet 12 out of 30 occupants (40 percent) on the fire floor were fatalities. Investigators from the Houston Arson Bureau have determined that a fallen cigarette caused ignition of one of the two upholstered chairs in room 404. The investigators believe that a lighted cigarette apparently fell onto or into the crevices of the upholstered chair some time during the evening and initiated a smouldering fire in the chair. The fire, which was reported to the Houston Fire Department at 2:25 am, occurred in a guest room located on the fourth floor of the hotel's 13 story, high-rise tower. The fire mainly involved the contents of one guest room, and exposed the fourth floor corridor to severe heat and smoke conditions. Due to the building configuration, the fire was also able to extend horizontally to two adjoining rooms on the fourth floor. In addition there was a minor vertical exterior fire extension to three guest rooms on the fifth floor. Smoke spread throughout the fire floor and, in varying degrees, to all levels of the building. All of the fatalities were occupants of the fire floor. A family of four and a family of five were found in rooms 407 and 411. One victim was found in the corridor outside room 413. In addition, five occupants on the fire floor were hospitalized, four in critical condition, and one in serious condition. Two of the injured died soon after the fire. Fire fighters found the injured behind closed doors in guest rooms and in the fourth floor exit-access corridor. The victims ranged in age from 2 years old to 67 years old, seven females and five males were among the victims.



Hotel fire safety

Before a fire

- When making a hotel reservation or checking into a hotel, ask about the fire safety features of the facility and choose a facility that's protected by both smoke alarms and fire sprinklers.
- When checking in, ask what the fire alarm system sound is for the facility.
- Become familiar with the fire escape plan posted in your room.
- Locate the two nearest stairs and count the number of doors between your room and the stairwell. In a fire, the hall may be dark and it may be difficult to see the exit stairway. Counting the number of doors may help you find the stairs.
- Look for exit signs wherever you are in the facility.
- Check to make sure the exits are not locked or blocked. Notify the hotel manager if exits are not accessible.
- Keep your room key by your nightstand so that you can easily reach it in an emergency.
- Travel with a flashlight and fresh batteries in case the power goes out.
- Report any unusual behaviour or fire hazards to hotel management.

During a fire

- If the fire alarm sounds, leave the building immediately. Take your room key with you, in case the exits are blocked by fire or smoke, you can return to your room.
- Test doors before you open them. If there is fire on the other side, it will feel warm around the cracks. If the door is warm, use your second way out or stay in your room and begin procedures for "If You Are Trapped." If the door is cool, open it cautiously and check to make sure your escape path is clear of fire and smoke.
- Always use the stairs, not an elevator, during a fire.
- If you must escape through smoke, crawl low under the smoke on your hands and knees to your exit.

If you are trapped

- If you can't escape and there's no fire in your room, stay put.
- Call the fire department and let them know your exact location.
- Shut off fans and air conditioners because they can draw smoke into the room.
- Stuff towels or sheets in the cracks around all doors and vents between you and the fire.
- If you can, open the window at the top and bottom, but be prepared to shut it if smoke comes into the room. Do not break the window so that you are able to shut it if needed.
- Stay at the window and signal the firefighters by waving a light-coloured cloth or a flashlight.