



**SCOTTISH**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland

---

**Report to: Falkirk Council Scrutiny Committee**

**SUBJECT:** Fire related risks posed by smoking and smoking materials.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

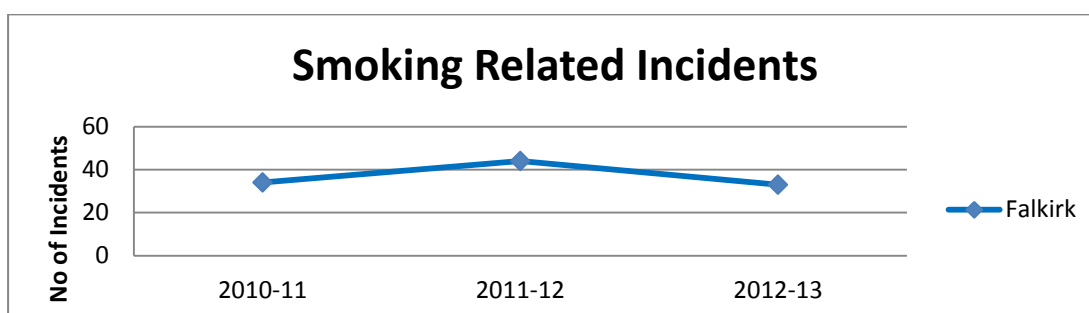
- 1.1 This report is presented to the Falkirk Scrutiny Committee following a specific inquiry in relation to the fire related risks posed by smoking and smoking materials.

**2. DATA ANALYSIS**

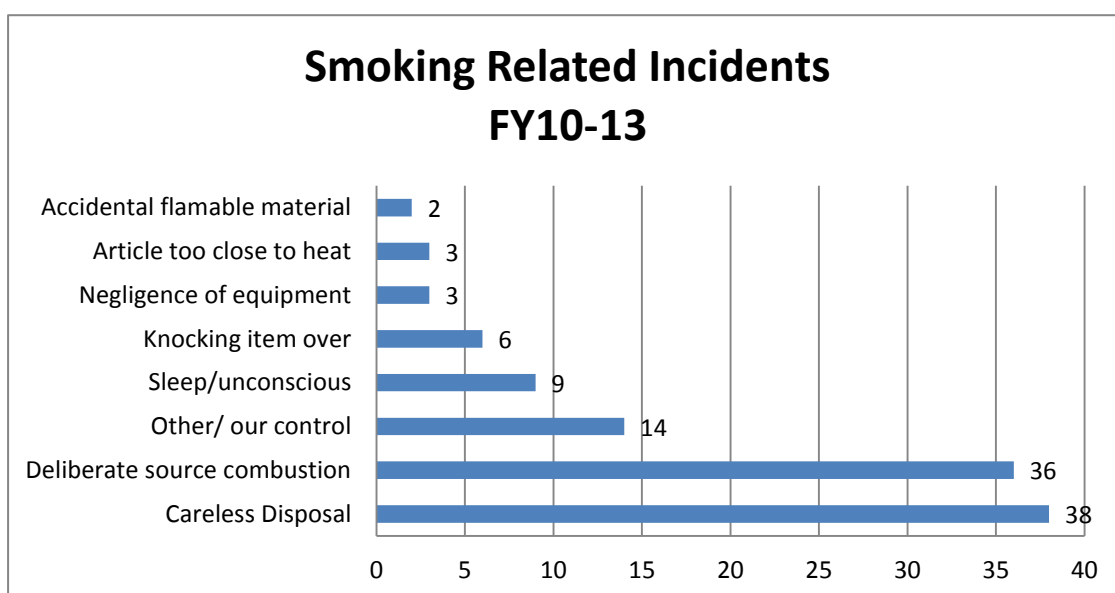
- 2.1 Carelessly discarded cigarettes and smokers materials, such as matches, have historically been attributed to a high proportion of fires and fire fatalities/casualties in domestic dwelling fires. Whilst this report considers this risk from a Falkirk area perspective, to provide a holistic overview, information from a Scottish perspective has also been considered
- 2.2 The table below provides a breakdown of the proportion of all domestic dwelling fires (accidental and deliberate) in the Falkirk area, over a three year period, where the cause was attributed smoking or smoking materials.

2010/11	4.5%
2011/12	8.2%
2012/13	9.4%

- 2.3 Taking cognisance of the proportions of smoking and smokers materials related incidents that were attributed to the cause of fire, the chart below depicts the trend in smoking related incidents in dwelling fires over a three year period in the Falkirk area. Whilst the chart depicts a rise in incidents in 2011/12, it is noticeable that this trend is on a downward trajectory in 2012/13.



- 2.4 The chart below provides a breakdown of the cause of smoking and smoking material related incidents over the three year reporting period. It should be noted that the highest proportion of causes are attributed to deliberate ignition (deliberate source combustion) and careless disposal.



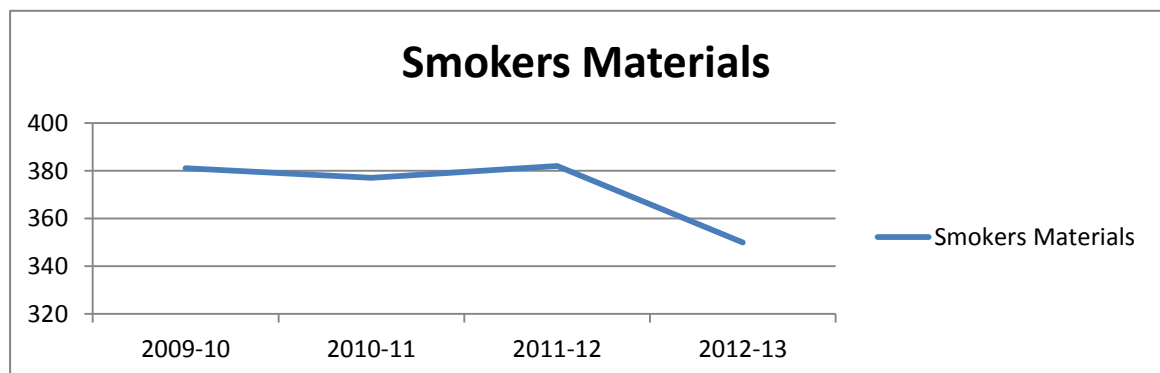
- 2.5 In the Falkirk area, over the 3 year reporting period, 1 fatality and 11 casualties resulted from incidents that were attributed to smoking and smoking materials.

- 2.6 From a Scottish perspective in the reporting period 2012-13 the table below depicts the top ten sources of ignition in accidental dwelling fires.

Source of ignition	Number	Percentage
Cooking appliance - Cooker incl. oven	1,907	38%
Cooking appliance - Grill/Toaster	491	10%
Cooking appliance - Ring/hot plate (separate appliance)	405	8%
Electricity supply - Wiring, cabling, plugs	373	7%
Smoking related - Smoking materials	350	7%
Cooking appliance - Microwave oven	187	4%
Not known/other	183	4%
Heating equipment - Heating/Fire	176	4%
Candles	107	2%
Other domestic style appliance - Tumble dryer	82	2%

The table shows that at 7 % smoking related materials being the cause of accidental dwelling fires are relatively low.

- 2.7 Again from a Scottish perspective, the table below depicts a downward trend in the source of ignition of accidental dwelling fires being attributed to smokers materials.



- 2.8 During this reporting period there were 46 fatal and 1014 nonfatal casualties in accidental dwelling fires where the cause was attributed to smoking and smoking materials.

### 3. PREVENTION STRATEGIES

- 3.1 A new standard for cigarettes has been created in the United Kingdom. On 31 December 2010, the British Standards Institution (BSI) published the standard

BS EN 16156 ("Cigarettes - Assessment of the ignition propensity – safety requirement") based on the European standard created earlier that year. From 17 November 2011 all cigarettes manufactured in Europe had to meet these new EU safety standards.

- 3.2 As a result of the required EU standard, cigarette paper manufacturers changed their paper production to insert two rings of thicker paper at two points along the cigarette. If the cigarette is left unattended, the burning tobacco will hit one of these rings and should then self-extinguish because the ring restricts the oxygen supply thus creating a cigarette with a reduced ignition propensity.
- 3.3 Reduced ignition propensity (RIP) cigarettes were introduced to Scotland in the last 4 months of 2011-12. The Scottish statistics figures for 2012-13 are the first complete financial year of reporting with this new standard. Cigarettes are recorded as part of "smoking materials" and there was a decrease of 32 accidental dwelling fires with this source of ignition between 2011-12 (382) and 2012-13 (350). Over the last 4 years smoking materials have consistently been the ignition source of 7 % of all accidental dwelling fires. As this is the first full year of this standard it is difficult to ascertain if this decrease is part of a downward trend. This will be monitored in the future.
- 3.4 The introduction of RIP cigarettes should contribute to a reduction in accidental dwelling fires and resultant fatalities and casualties. However, the increasing availability and usage of counterfeit cigarettes, which are less likely to be RIP requires to be taken into consideration. As an example HRMS estimates that 9 per cent of cigarettes and around 38 per cent of the hand-rolling tobacco smoked in the UK in 2010-11 was counterfeit (Source, Progress in tackling tobacco smuggling, Report By The Comptroller And Auditor General, 2013).
- 3.5 Smoking cessation across the Scottish population may assist in the reduction of smokers materials being the cause of dwelling fires and resultant fatalities and casualties In a reporting period from 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2013,

the total number of 'self-reported' quits at one month after 'quit date' in Scotland was 89,353. (source, NHS Smoking Cessation Service Statistics (Scotland) 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2013, Information Services Division, Official Statistics Publication for Scotland).

- 3.6 The introduction of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1998 set levels of fire resistance for domestic upholstered furniture, furnishings and other products containing upholstery. These regulations reduce the possibility that accidentally discarded smokers materials can cause the ignition of furniture and furnishings. In recognising that the Regulations have been in place for some 16 years, it is difficult to fully ascertain the direct correlation between the introduction the Regulations and the reduction in smoking materials related incidents, as it will be a further number of years until it can be safely argued that all furniture and furnishing that were manufactured before the introduction of the Regulations are no longer present in domestic dwellings.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The analysis of available data indicates that the percentage of incidents that are attributed to smoking and smoking materials in the Falkirk area are consistent with that of Scotland. The data also indicates that whilst smoking and smoking related incidents are on the decline the consequences and outcomes of this type of incident are disproportionately high in terms of fatalities and casualties.
- 4.2 The SFRS is committed to working with partners to reduce the number of incidents where smokers materials have been the source of ignition and to minimise the negative outcomes of these incidents. Examples of how this is to be achieved are:-
- National SFRS and Government sponsored smoking related media campaigns.

- Media campaign within SFRS
- Home safety visit risk assessments
- Thematic activities relating to smoking and smoking material related sources of ignition.
- Working with partners to support and assist in smoking cessation campaigns.

## **5. RECOMMENDATION**

5.1 The Falkirk Scrutiny Committee is invited to;

Note and approve or otherwise the content of this report.

**Gary Laing**  
**Local Senior Officer**  
**Falkirk and West Lothian**  
**January 2013**