

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3905/06
by Henrik Kristensen (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Self-extinguishing cigarettes

Each year sees elderly people in particular dying as a result of domestic fires. The predominant cause, according to a recently issued report by Denmark's emergency control board (Fatal Fires in Denmark 2000-2005), is that especially people with dementia and physical disabilities burn to death because a dropped cigarette has set fire to their furniture or because they have smoked in bed and fallen asleep.

Since 2003 New York has achieved a significant decline in the number of fires after introducing a requirement that all cigarettes must be self-extinguishing.

Self-extinguishing cigarettes that are known technically as RIP cigarettes (Reduced Ignition Propensity) differ from ordinary cigarettes in that they go out if they are not smoked. This is due to the fact that the paper is of variable thickness and does not contain citric acid as an ignition agent.

American surveys indicate that a significant reduction in the danger of fire from cigarettes can be achieved without affecting the quality or dangerousness of the cigarettes in question. ('Fire Safer' Cigarettes, Harvard School of Public Health / American Legacy Foundation, January 2005).

What prospects does the Commission see for self-extinguishing cigarettes? What is its position on the possible introduction of a general requirement for self-extinguishing cigarettes in the EU?