

MARCH: Week 3 – Medical Oxygen and Fire

Overview: The presence of portable medical oxygen in the home has increased over the past decade. Medical oxygen adds a higher percentage of oxygen to the air a patient uses to breathe. Fire needs oxygen to burn. If a fire should start in an oxygen-enriched area, the material burning will burn more quickly. Homes where medical oxygen is used need specific fire safety rules to keep people safe from fire and burns.

Between 2015 and 2019, 18 Tennessee residents died from home fires where medical oxygen equipment was involved in ignition.



Resources: The following resources are available:

- Medical oxygen safety tip sheet
 - <http://www.nfpa.org/~/-/media/files/public-education/resources/safety-tip-sheets/oxygensafety.pdf?la=en>
- “NFPA Safety Tips – Portable Home Oxygen” YouTube video
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNvXGEiqqks>
- “Home Medical Oxygen Fire Safety” YouTube video
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXqX-WQ_zoY

Media Tools: Use the following pre-written media releases and social media posts in your efforts to promote medical oxygen safety:

- **Twitter**
 - Don't smoke with medical oxygen present! There is no safe way to smoke in the home when oxygen is in use. @TNCommercelnsur #FireSafeTN
 - Stay safe! Keep oxygen cylinders at least 5 feet from a heat source, open flames, or electrical devices @TNCommercelnsur #FireSafeTN
 - Be careful with medical oxygen! Oxygen isn't flammable, but fire needs it to burn. More oxygen present = more fire risk @TNCommercelnsur
- **Facebook**
 - Don't smoke with medical oxygen present! There is no safe way to smoke in the home when oxygen is in use. For more safety tips, visit: <https://www.nfpa.org/~/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/OxygenSafety.ashx?la=en>
 - Stay safe! Keep oxygen cylinders at least 5 feet from a heat source, open flames, or electrical devices. For more safety tips, visit: <https://www.nfpa.org/~/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/OxygenSafety.ashx?la=en>
 - The air is normally 21% oxygen. Oxygen is not flammable, but fire needs it to burn. When more oxygen is present, any fire that starts will burn hotter and faster than usual. More oxygen in the air means that things such as hair, plastic, skin oils, clothing, and furniture can catch fire at lower temperatures. To learn more about medical oxygen, please visit: <https://www.nfpa.org/~/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/OxygenSafety.ashx?la=en>

Educator Tip: Identify and meet with any home health providers in your area that may be responsible for delivery or upkeep of home medical oxygen. Find out what steps they take to reduce fire risk for their patients and offer the help of your fire department to further reduce the risk. Working with local partners on this issue is extremely important, as medical oxygen is an absolute necessity for many residents.

Some ways to help include:

- Talking to residents directly about fire safety and medical oxygen
- Distributing medical oxygen information to home health organizations and their patients
- Demonstrating the fire dangers of medical oxygen, perhaps via a live burn demo
- Initiating a social media campaign to spread the word about fire and medical oxygen

NFPA Messaging:

Medical Oxygen

18.1.1 Medical oxygen can cause material to ignite more easily and make fires burn at a faster rate than normal. It can make an existing fire burn faster and hotter.

18.1.2 A patient on oxygen should not smoke.

18.1.3 Never smoke where medical oxygen is used.

18.1.5 Keep oxygen cylinders at least 5 feet from a heat source, open flames, or electrical devices.

18.1.6 Body oil, hand lotion, and items containing oil and grease can easily burn. Keep oil and grease away from where oxygen is in use.

18.1.9 Where medical oxygen is in use, never use a sparking toy, an open flame such as a match or lighter, a fireplace or stove, or any other device fueled by gas, kerosene, wood, or coal.