



News Release

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety & Corrections
Public Safety Services

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.lasfm.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Warning Concerning Electronic Cigarette Devices

Baton Rouge, LA – Desiring to become more health-conscious, an increasing number of Louisiana citizens who have smoked tobacco-laden products are embracing “vaping,” which involves a person inhaling a vapor that is most often flavored and may sometimes be infused with nicotine. Likewise, vaping has also attracted huge numbers of non-smokers—including many teenagers.

While the debate continues as to whether vaping represents a healthier alternative to smoking, there are growing concerns surrounding the rising numbers of incidents where the practice, which requires the use of a battery-powered “cigarette” device that heats and vaporizes a liquid tobacco substitute, has led to serious burn injuries.

It should be noted that the injuries sustained are not the result of inhaling the vapor produced, but rather from the lithium-ion batteries that power the devices.

In a recent incident that was reported to the Louisiana State Fire Marshal’s Office, a Baton Rouge man suffered second and third-degree burns to a leg and hand after he placed his vaporizing device in a pant pocket containing a spare lithium-ion battery. The man told an investigator that prior to observing or experiencing any heat and/or fire, he heard a popping sound.

State Fire Marshal investigators have also learned of an earlier but similar incident involving a Houma man who also suffered serious burns to a leg after a lithium-ion battery exploded and caught fire while in a pant pocket.

In contacting several hospital burn units, investigators were advised that a surprising number of people have been treated in the recent past for less-serious burns from the popular devices.

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Unfortunately, Louisiana victims are not alone as research revealed countless cases where people nationwide received serious and, in some cases, disfiguring burns and injuries from batteries exploding and catching fire in these devices.

Initial findings of an on-going investigation by the State Fire Marshal's Office into the cause(s) of the reported burns have pointed to the practice of placing loose lithium-ion batteries within close proximity to metal objects in confined spaces where there is potential for the objects, such as keys, coins, and vaping devices, to come into contact with the batteries.

Once contact is made between the battery and metal, overheating can occur which, in turn, can cause batteries to release gases, which greatly increases the probability of ignition. Investigators have identified the suspected batteries involved in the Louisiana incidents as model "18650," a 3.7 volt battery that is sold under various brand names.

Because of the increasing use of battery-powered cigarette vaporizing devices and a correlating potential of injury to users, the State Fire Marshal recommends that vaping enthusiasts follow these guidelines:

- Do not place loose lithium-ion batteries in close proximity to metal objects or to other batteries. This would include being placed in pants pockets, purses, or bags.
- Make sure that there are no deformities to any batteries such as dents, scratches, or that the plastic coating covering a battery is not broken or worn away. If any such conditions exist, dispose of the battery in accordance with manufacturer instructions.
- Use the appropriate battery for the device and/or charger it is designed for. Never use batteries that are not specific to the intended device and/or charger.
- Purchase batteries from reputable retailers. Local, in-store purchases are preferable as salespersons can inspect the device and match it with a specific battery designed to be used with the device.
- When placing batteries in a device and/or charger, make sure that they are placed in the correct orientation as to the polarity of the battery (i.e., positive-positive; negative-negative).

For more information regarding this issue or to report an incident involving a battery-powered cigarette device, please contact the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at (800) 638-2772, or visit the agency's website at: www.cpsc.gov.

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**News Release – Addendum (Consumer Alert –
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E-Cigarette Explodes in Man's Pocket

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Published on Feb 24, 2016
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Screen shot of exploding lithium-ion battery in pocket of man's pants.

Source: Youtube.com