

Europe switches to self-extinguishing cigarettes

November 14 2011

It's lights out in Europe this weekend for old-style cigarettes that manufacturers haven't adapted to burn themselves out if left unattended.

Come Friday, in a bid to cut down on smoking-induced [fire](#) deaths across the continent, all cigarettes sold in the 27-state European Union -- home to half a billion consumers -- will have to be self-extinguishing.

"Evidence shows that the number of fatalities can be reduced by more than 40 percent with the introduction of 'Reduced Ignition Propensity' (RIP) cigarettes," the executive [European Commission](#) said on Monday, citing data from Finland, the first EU state to implement new legislation agreed in 2008.

Brussels estimates that nearly 500 lives a year can be saved in this way from some 30,000 annual fires started by lit cigarettes that are forgotten.

On Thursday, a three-year phasing-in period for the legislation will come to an end, meaning all 27 EU states will thereafter have to adopt the same norms as the United States, Canada and Australia.

The changes do not affect cigars.

Manufacturers insert two rings of thicker paper within the cigarette that restricts air and [oxygen supply](#) and so block the lit tobacco's progress.

[EU Commission](#) health spokesman Frederic Vincent said: "If you don't

puff on them, the cigarettes go out all by themselves."

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