



Helpdesk

EU NEWS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF “ACQUIS COMMUNAUTAIRE”

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Public health and safety:

Self-extinguishing cigarettes on the way

A new mandate received from the European Commission asks CEN (European Committee for Standardisation) to develop a European Standard(s) for the reduced 'ignition propensity' of cigarettes. The goal is to reduce the deaths, injuries, and damage caused by unattended cigarettes.

In addition to the well-documented health risks associated with smoking, the fact that cigarettes are burning when in use means they can be a fire hazard. According to a study by the European Commission, carelessly unattended cigarettes cause an estimated minimum of 1.000 fatalities in the EU every year. In July CEN received Mandate M/425 from the European Commission relative to the safety requirements for cigarettes.

The mandate specifies that the European Standard(s) should include the fire safety requirement and a suitable test method to determine whether the requirement is fulfilled by the cigarette specimen tested. The International Standards Organization (ISO) currently has a work programme underway in this field and in accordance with the Vienna Agreement. CEN will request that ISO take the lead on this issue.

Though this mandate initially requests the standard be prepared for 2010, it is likely that deadline will change to accommodate the usual three-year timeframe for the development of a standard. This initiative is consistent with a global trend towards reduced ignition propensity (RIP) cigarettes. More than half of all US states and all of Canada require RIP cigarettes, and Australia is preparing similar legislation.

It is the intention of the Commission to allow after three years only self-extinguishing cigarettes to be sold on the market.