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PETER J. OSTROSKY  
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Heads of Fire Departments

**From:** Peter J. Ostroskey, State Fire Marshal

**Date:** November 1, 2018

**Subject:** **Breathe Easy: Using Home Oxygen Safely Campaign**

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As more people are bringing medical oxygen into the home, they need to understand the new fire risks they also bring into the home. Physicians, firefighters, families and other caregivers play a key role in educating patients about the safe use of oxygen.

Using home oxygen increases the risk of fires and burns. When oxygen is used in the home, the amount of oxygen in the air, furniture, clothing, and hair goes up, making it easier for a fire to start and spread.

In 2017, there were three fatal fires from smoking where home oxygen was in use that took the lives of four people. In one fire, a grandmother and grandson died while the father was able to escape. Smoking is the leading, but not the only cause of these fires. Our education must start by expressing compassion for long-term medical oxygen users and helping them understand we want them to live long enough to quit, and that they can.

### **Breathe Easy: Home Oxygen Fire Safety Campaign**

The [Breathe Easy: Home Oxygen Fire Safety Campaign](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/home-oxygen-safety) (<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/home-oxygen-safety>) has materials for patients, physicians, families, and other caregivers on using home oxygen safely. The toolkit includes:

- A guide to protecting yourself and loved ones from home oxygen fires in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [Portuguese](#);
- [Home Oxygen Safety poster \(11x17 inches\)](#);

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- [Fire Service Guidelines for Educating Patients about the Dangers of Smoking While Using Home Oxygen](#);
- [Home Oxygen Safety presentation](#) (PDF of a PPT) - updated 2018;
- [Home Oxygen TV Public Service Announcement](#) (PSA) – is on the DFS YouTube™ Channel as well as the toolkit webpage.

To order quantities of the pamphlet or poster, free of charge, visit the [Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse](#) ( <https://massclearinghouse.ehs.state.ma.us/> ). This is a website that many health care providers use when looking for health information for their patients.

Please feel free to download these materials, share them with your Board of Health, your Senior Center and Council on Aging. Local housing authorities might be willing to use the poster and the local cable access television might be willing to air the television PSA.

Contact Cynthia Ouellette, the public education coordinator at [Cynthia.Ouellette@mass.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Ouellette@mass.gov) or (978) 567-3381, or Jennifer Mieth, the public information officer at (978) 567-3189 or [Jennifer.Mieth@mass.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Mieth@mass.gov) if you have additional questions about the campaign materials.