

Balcony fire safety for smokers

Make a simple sand bucket to butt out on your deck

Alberta has seen a recent spike in fires caused by improperly disposed cigarettes that have destroyed everything from single-family homes to entire apartment complexes. The single unifying factor: all these fires were completely preventable.

If you smoke at home on your balcony or deck, all it takes are some simple precautions to minimize the risk of a cigarette causing a fire that impacts your life and the lives of those around you. The easiest thing you can do is to make sure you're disposing of your cigarette butts in a non-combustible container filled with non-combustible material. Remember: the dirt in a flower pot can burn, so find an alternative.

Some property management companies install cigarette receptacles on balconies or in public smoking areas, but others require you to provide your own receptacle. In that case, you can build your own with very little effort.

How little effort? Half-fill a glass jar, metal food can, or metal bucket with sand, then extinguish your cigarettes in there. When it gets too full of butts, pluck the old ones out and dispose of them.

Metal cans are easy to find, though a metal bucket with a wider opening should have more room in it. If you don't have any sand on hand, you can purchase large bags of sand at most landscaping/garden shops or at home renovation stores, or you can find smaller sand bags at service stations.

A few quick tips:

- Always use a bucket or can made of non-combustible material, never plastic or cardboard.
- If you're worried about rust, you can use a glass jar instead of a metal bucket. Just be careful you don't break it.
- If you don't have any sand on hand, you can use water in a glass jar in the summer months, though this no longer works once it gets cold enough outside that water turns to ice.