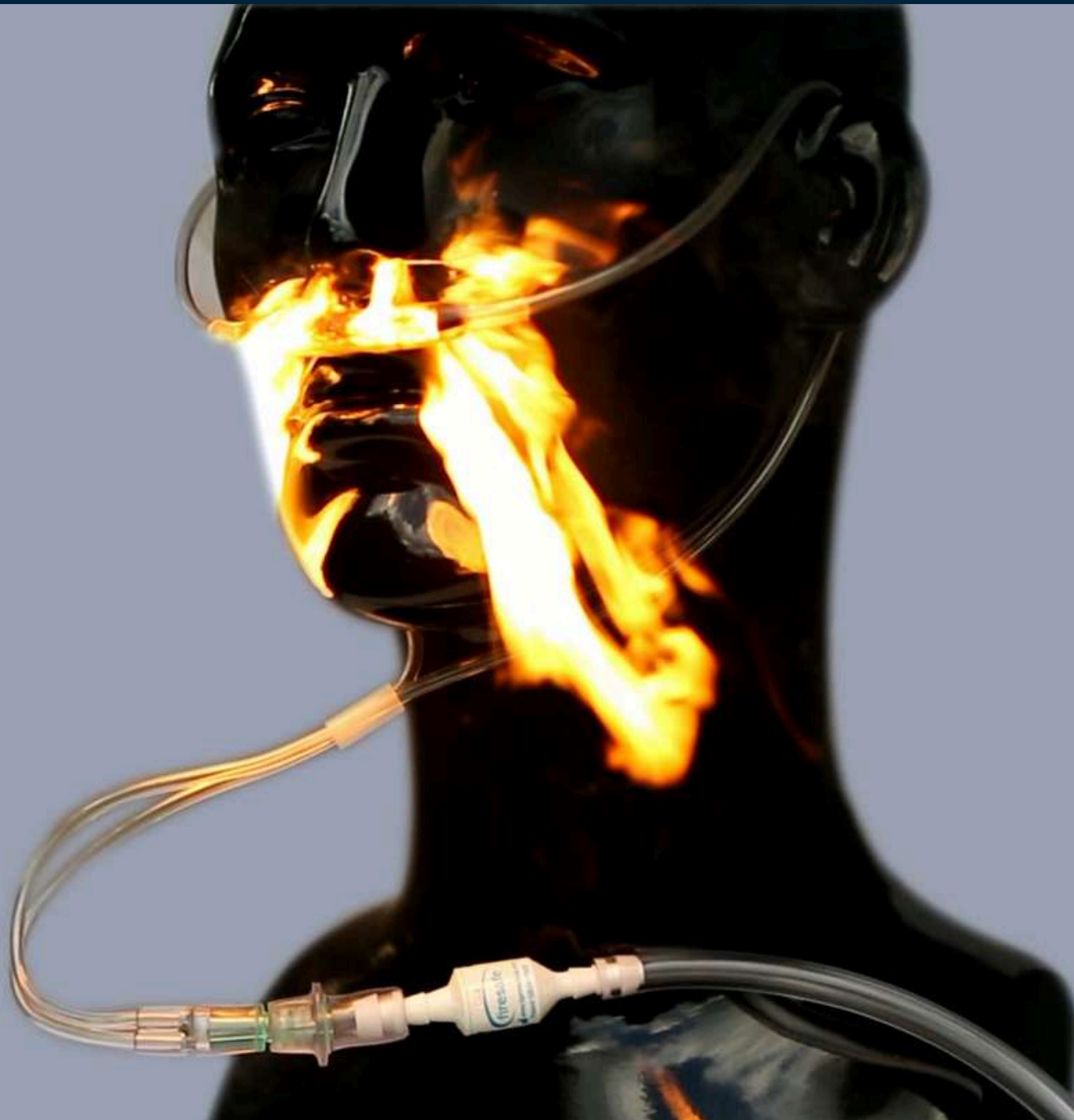




How to seek Medicaid Funding for Thermal fuses in your State





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Fires involving home oxygen are an all too common problem that claim dozens of lives and cause hundreds of burns every year.

They are a material public health issue.

But there are solutions, including a small thermal fuse device (also known as an oxygen firebreak) that shuts off the flow of oxygen in the event of a fire in the tubing.

These devices have been provided to all Veteran's Health Administration (VA) home oxygen patients since 2018, but there are still hundreds of thousands more who could benefit from them.

The States of Iowa, Washington and North Dakota have opted to reimburse (fund) home oxygen providers for bidirectional thermal fuses through their State Medicaid systems.

This required the States to make a simple change to their Medicaid policy. The policy change came about thanks to the efforts of people like you who are passionate about making a difference and saving lives.

Raymond A. Reynolds, MA, CPM, CCP

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Reynolds".

**Director of Fire & EMS/Police Officer
City of Nevada**



How can you help?



Here's how you can seek support for Medicaid funding in your State:

1. Find out the name of the most senior Medicaid official in your State
 - Look for the person with a job title like “Medicaid Director” or “Chief Medical Officer”
 - They work in the Medicaid section of your State’s Health and Human Services Department
2. Write to them outlining the following:
 - The issue (remember they may not be aware of it until now)
 - The scale of the problem nationally
 - The scale of the problem in your State (we can provide this information – see below)
 - The potential solutions

To help you, we’ve provided a helpful background briefing outlining the key information (see following pages). ***Please use this as a tool to write the message in your own words rather than copying and pasting it.***

3. Request a meeting to discuss the issue
 - In your letter / email, include a request to meet for a face to face briefing (we can support you with this)

Do you need help?

The Home Oxygen Fire Safety Working Group is a coalition of fire safety experts, burns and respiratory clinicians, patient groups, home oxygen providers, and industry, working together to raise awareness of the issue of home oxygen fires and to campaign for change.

We are here to support you:

- We can provide data on the number of home oxygen fire incidents in your State (captured from media reports)
- We can review your letter/email before you send it
- We can attend your briefing meeting with the State Medicaid contact

Home oxygen fires in the United States



Background:

- Around 16 million people have been diagnosed with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in the US (1 in 8 over the age of 45), with millions more undiagnosed.
- Of these, an estimated 1.5 million require home oxygen therapy (HOT).ⁱⁱ
- HOT increases the levels of oxygen in the blood, relieving symptoms such as breathlessness and fatigue, and is an important treatment for patients with lung conditions.
- HOT is delivered in various forms: an oxygen concentrator (that filters air from the atmosphere), liquid oxygen (delivered in large containers or 'dewars'), and gaseous oxygen (cylinders).

The problem:

- While oxygen is not flammable, increased concentrations will enable fires to start much more easily, and supplemental oxygen will make a fire burn more fiercely.
- An estimated 100-150 people a yearⁱⁱⁱ die in home oxygen fires (one every four days) and over 1200 suffer burn injuries.^{iv}
- Around a quarter of incidents result in a whole house fire^v, and often affect neighboring residents and properties.
- Two firefighters were killed between 2017 and 2021 attending home oxygen fires.^{vi}
- Leading fire safety experts report that firefighters who attend home oxygen fires often experience long term psychological trauma.
- Most home oxygen fires are caused by smoking;^{vii} other risks include gas stoves, open fires, and candles.
- Researchers estimate that as many as 52% of home oxygen patients continue to smoke.^{viii} That's approximately 750,000 people.

Home oxygen fires in the United States



The solution:

- A collaborative, multidisciplinary approach has seen a dramatic reduction in home oxygen fire deaths in England. Similarly, in Washington State, medical, Fire-EMT services, and home oxygen providers are working together.
- This includes conducting risk assessments, educating patients, and fitting smoke alarms.
- The use of a safety device - a thermal fuse (firebreak) - that stops the flow of oxygen in the event of a fire in the tubing (now used in 25 countries around the world) is also part of this approach.
- Between 2013 and 2017, only one home oxygen fire death was recorded in England, among a patient population of around 80,000.^{ix} That's around 20 times fewer than the US.
- This approach is now being adopted in parts of the US. Washington, Iowa and North Dakota have begun coverage of bidirectional thermal fuses via their State Medicaid system, and multiple fire departments are undertaking installation initiatives.

Home oxygen fires in the United States



Support:

- Leading fire and professional clinical organizations are taking action on the issue:
- In 2018 the Veterans Health Administration mandated the use of thermal fuses among all its home oxygen patients (approximately 85,000).
- The American Burn Association (ABA) issued a position statement in favor of efforts to “promote, enact, and sustain legislation and policies that support a multi-faceted approach to burn injury and fire prevention for users of home oxygen”.
- The International Association of Fire Chiefs issued a supportive statement in July 2022.
- A Home Oxygen Fire Safety Working Group - a coalition of fire safety experts, burns and respiratory clinicians, patient groups, home oxygen providers, and industry – led by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) is working together to raise awareness of the issue of home oxygen fires and to campaign for change.

Policy asks:

- We would like to see bidirectional thermal fuses covered by the State Medicaid system, as it is in Iowa, Washington and North Dakota.
- For more information visit: www.thermal-fuse.info / Oxygen firebreak – Wikipedia

i National Heart Blood and Lung Institute

ii American Thoracic Society Optimizing Home Oxygen Therapy. An Official American Thoracic Society Workshop Report | Annals of the American Thoracic Society (atsjournals.org)

iii A risk-based approach to safer home oxygen delivery, BPR Medical, 2021

iv Mastropieri et al. (2020), 18 Stop the Burn: A Smoking and Home Oxygen Safety Initiative with Use of Firebreaks, Journal of Burn Care & Research, 41(1):S15.

v Flash Burns While on Home Oxygen Therapy: Tracking Trends and Identifying Areas for Improvement, American Journal of Medical Quality

vi A risk-based approach to safer home oxygen delivery, BPR Medical, 2021

vii Cooper, Brendan G., Home Oxygen and Domestic Fires

viii Mastropieri et al. (2020), 18 Stop the Burn: A Smoking and Home Oxygen Safety Initiative with Use of Firebreaks, Journal of Burn Care & Research, 41(1):S15.

ix A risk-based approach to safer home oxygen delivery, BPR Medical, 2021