

## **Executive Summary**

All evidence points to the fact that people who abuse alcohol are a growing high-risk fire group. Alcohol-impaired fire fatalities exhibit an age pattern that is quite the opposite of past fire fatality patterns identified in South Carolina. Years ago, the majority of fire fatalities were occurring in our very young, 10 and under. Due to strong educational efforts targeted toward this audience, we have seen a vast reduction in fire related deaths. However, we are seeing a growth in victims between the ages of 30 and 60, and in a sampling, blood alcohol levels are elevated suggesting a strong correlation between intoxication and the ability to detect and escape from a fire. However, children, the elderly, and disabled are also the victims of alcohol-related fires because their caretakers may be too impaired to recognize the fire and render assistance.

Smoking combined with alcohol use creates an even greater risk for fire injuries and fatalities. Studies have shown that more than half of all alcohol-impaired fire fatalities were the result of fires caused by careless smoking. Studies have also shown that 53-65% of all alcohol-impaired fire fatalities were the result of fires caused by smoking. Careless smoking is a leading cause of fire deaths in South Carolina and causes about 1,000 deaths each year in the United States.

As identified by the United States Fire Administration, smokers consume more alcohol than do non-smokers, heavy drinking tends to be associated with heavy smoking, and a large majority of alcoholics are smokers.



**ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND  
SMOKING...**

**A DEADLY  
COMBINATION FOR  
FIRES**