



**Japan Society for Tobacco Control**

**日本禁煙学会**

<http://www.jstc.or.jp/> E-mail [desk@nosmoke55.jp](mailto:desk@nosmoke55.jp)  
〒162-0063 東京都新宿区市谷薬王寺町 30-5-201  
Tel 03-5360-8233 FAX 03-5360-6736

1 March 2021

**Mr. Ryota Takeda, Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications**

Manabu Sakuta, Chairperson, Japan Society for Tobacco Control, General incorporated  
30-5-201 Ichigayayakuoji-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo

**Due to the forest fires in Tochigi prefecture, open fires or flames in forests are now  
strictly prohibited except in designated areas**

**Request for legal measures to prevent passive smoking as well**

Honorable ladies and gentlemen:

On February 21, it was reported that the forest fire that started in Ashikaga, Tochigi has spread to residential areas due to low humidity.

Even after 5 days, the fire has not been extinguished... regarding the forest fire in Ashikaga, Tochigi "people were holding cigarettes between their fingers" (from "news every." broadcast on 25 February 2021)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCvtI8tbnc>

I thought that combusted tobacco was considered to be "dangerous" ... for starting forest fires, 119 (emergency) male responder, Asahi Shimbun

[https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASP2W7332P2SUUHB011.html?iref=comtop\\_BreakingNews\\_list](https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASP2W7332P2SUUHB011.html?iref=comtop_BreakingNews_list)

A man who reported the forest fire in Tochigi Ashikaga testified that he saw "smoke from a hiking trail"

<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20210225/k10012885551000.html>

According to a report by Kyodo News, "at a press conference on the 26th, Ryota Takeda, Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications called for increasing awareness nationwide in

response to a series of forest fires in Ashikaga, Tochigi and other areas and stated ‘We will try our best to prevent damage to all homes. I want citizens to be careful when handling fire.’

On the 25th, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications notified local governments to publicize a thorough review of fire safety management for local residents and hikers and the prohibition against disposing cigarette butts. Fire fighting activities in Ashikaga are continuing, and seven personnel have been dispatched to the site.”

Regarding the current forest fire, the carelessness with combustible tobacco has been covered on Nippon Television (news every). Open fires and flames at rest areas are strictly prohibited, but it seems that some people did not understand that this prohibition includes smoking tobacco. According to the above NHK report, 5% of forest fires are caused by smoking tobacco, and 30% are caused by campfires; in general more than 60% of forest fires caused by human error.

Based on the above reports, we request the following. Thank you for your consideration.

#### Chronicle

1. In general, prohibit smoking during hiking and trekking to prevent passive smoking. Smoking on public walkways and promenades is already banned in some regions and countries because it is not only unpleasant but can lead to deadly diseases like myocardial infarction and stroke<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

2. Using the current forest fire as a learning opportunity, please promote legal measures “to strictly prohibit open fires and flames in forests and on mountains except in designated places” to reduce the chance of forest fires in the future “and to prevent passive smoking”.

3. Until now, there seems to be no coordination of legal regulations for smoking and fires in forests, on mountains and on hiking trails. So please take this opportunity to discuss and to coordinate regulations from the Fire and Disaster Management Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; the Forestry Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; the Ministry of the Environment; and the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (which regulates the harms of passive smoking including from heated tobacco) and other ministries.

4. In forests, on mountains and on hiking trails; it will be difficult to enforce penalties except when an actual fire occurs, because activities are not well monitored. Nonetheless, local governments

should post signs stating “No open fires or flames including smoking” to publicize, to educate and to warn people about the risks of forest fires from smoking.

5. Tobacco cigarettes are designed and produced so that they are not easily extinguished, which causes many fire hazards. Considering the Product Liability Law (PL Law), please change the production method so that tobacco cigarettes can be more easily extinguished.

6. For the above discussion, revisions and analysis; consider sustainable development goal (SDG)

15 <https://www.ungcjin.org/sdgs/goals/goal15.html>

15.2 By 2020, promote the sustainable management of all forests and prevent deforestation,

15.4 Promote the conservation of mountain ecosystems including biodiversity by 2030,

I think it is necessary to include such points also in the discussion.

Conclusion

#### References

1) Five things to know about Oregon's outdoor smoking ban

<https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/travel/outdoors/2014/11/13/five-things-know-oregons-outdoor-smoking-ban/18990829/>

2) <https://besthike.com/2011/04/08/smokers-banned-on-hiking-trails/>

3) NO SMOKING ORDINANCE APPROVED BY JAMESTOWN PARKS & REC

<https://www.newsdakota.com/2021/01/13/no-smoking-ordinance-approved-by-jamestown-parks-rec/>