

Smoking cause of New Bedford Tinkham Road fatal fire

State Fire Marshal Peter J. Ostroskey, New Bedford Fire Chief Michal C. Gomes, and New Bedford Police Chief Joseph C. Cordeiro said the cause of the **January 17, 2018 fatal fire at 282 Tinkham Road**, New Bedford was the improper use or disposal of smoking materials.

The victim, identified by the Office of the District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III as 56-year old Agnes Leite, was rescued by the fire department. Paramedics administered a cyanide antidote to Ms. Leite and were able to resuscitate her, but she died later at the hospital. Cyanide is one of the toxic, deadly gases produced when household furnishings burn.

Chief Gomes said, "I want to extend my heartfelt condolences to the friends and family of Ms. Leite."

The fire started on a mattress in a second floor bedroom where the victim was found. She was known to roll her own cigarettes, which are not required to be fire resistant as commercially produced cigarettes are. All cigarettes sold in Massachusetts must be "Fire Standard Compliant" and resist ignition when not being actively smoked.

The fire was jointly investigated by members of the New Bedford Fire and Police Departments and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Smoking caused fatal fires in December in Abington and Springfield and is a possible cause in other 2018 fire deaths. Smoking was the cause of a major apartment fire in Rutland on January 12 that displaced 50 people. State Fire Marshal Ostroskey said, "If your New Year's resolution was to try to quit smoking, now's a good time to quit again. Many people aren't successful the first few times." The Massachusetts

Department of Public Health has a Smoker's Helpline 1-800-QUIT-NOW. Talk to a quit coach today, or ask your doctor about the many ways they can help you.