



6th March 2018

D Walton QFSM DMS MIFireE
Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Director of Service Delivery
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Dear Pharmacist

Using paraffin-based skin products safely: essential information for community pharmacists

In West Yorkshire, there have been 3 deaths from fire attributable to the use of paraffin-based skin products within the last 5 years; all those who died were people who smoked. In 2017, following the death of Pauline Taylor in Huddersfield, HM Coroner noted that health care professionals ***'may not be aware of the potential fire hazard posed by emollient creams which contain a lower level of paraffin'***.

The fire risk associated with the use of paraffin-based skin products was previously only thought to be evident in ointments with a base of more than 50% base paraffin. Recent fatal fire incident investigations have identified that the use of any paraffin-based skin product, regardless of strength, can also contribute to the intensity and rapid fire spread of fire, when soaked into fabrics (such as bandages, clothing and bedding) and exposed to an ignition source such as smoking, cooking or open flame.

As part of our campaign to highlight these fire risks, West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service is contacting health professionals, including pharmacists, to remind you about the flammability of these products, when contaminated fabrics are exposed to an ignition source.

What you can do to help

We would like you to help us prevent any further injuries or loss of life to your customers from this cause by:

- **Asking** their smoking status when dispensing or selling paraffin-based skin products.
- **Talking** to them about the potential fire risks of using these products, especially if they are smoking, cooking or near to an open flame.
- **Recording** any advice given on the Patient Medication Record, remembering to communicate this to them at regular intervals.
- **Taking care** not to cover up the flammability warning on the product.
- **Referring** people back to the GP where they smoke **and/or** have a condition which places them at high risk of fire such as memory loss, poor concentration or drowsiness; and adding their details to their Patient Medical Record.
- **Sharing** the content of this letter with your colleagues and teams.

If you have any further ideas or suggestions about how we can work together to ensure people stay safe and well within their homes, please contact Claire Tabert in our Central Prevention team on 0113 387 5731.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Walton'.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Dave Walton
Director of Service Delivery