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Consumer Alert

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Fake Nails Can Be Fire Hazard

Nails Ignite Within Seconds

POSTED: 12:24 p.m. EST November 25, 2002

Many women pay top dollar for artificial nails. But no matter what the price, fake nails can be a fire hazard.

Jane Gober learned how easily fake nails can catch on fire when she was lighting acolyte candles at church.

"I had a Bic lighter and to get to the angle it is, I tipped my hand too far up and the flame was directly on the nail," she said. "When I pulled my hand away, it was like a little candle. I just blew it out."

Once the nail ignites, it takes 10 to 15 seconds before it completely burns, disintegrating into nothing.

A test of a professional acrylic nail, a painted press-on and a plain press-on found the store-bought press-on nail was consumed the fastest -- in six seconds.

Chemists say the plastic tip and the acrylic coating are made of polymers that are extremely flammable.

In a scientific experiment at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, researchers lit five different types of artificial nails on fire with a birthday candle and found it took an average of 1.1 seconds for them to ignite.

"The liquid is flammable, the powders are flammable, so anything could happen." said Carmen Jones, of Daired's Salon in Arlington, Texas.

To avoid fire at your fingertips when lighting a cigarette or candle, Daired's recommends keeping nails shorter, using a lighter with a long tip and just being aware of the danger.

Lamar University chemists also tested the flammability of natural nails as well and say they can also catch fire but not nearly as quickly as artificial nails.

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