

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## Chimney and flue house fire risk increases

Tuesday, 2 July 2013

As colder weather sets in, South Australia's fire services are increasingly responding to house fires caused by chimneys and flues.

Last year, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters responded to **78 house fires linked to chimneys and flues**. In 2013, they've responded to 25 (to date).

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Greg Howard said chilly nights are prompting people to use open fires, combustion heaters and gas heaters to keep warm.

"Firefighters are increasingly responding to fires caused by sparks or embers that have escaped from open fires or by combustibles such as furniture or clothing placed too close to open fires, heaters and flues. They are also fighting fires caused by poorly installed or poorly maintained chimneys and flues."

"The MFS recommends that you have your chimney or flue inspected and cleaned by a qualified person to ensure it hasn't become blocked or deteriorated over the years. It's also important to have the roof space checked, to ensure debris (such as loose insulation or bird's nests) hasn't gathered around a chimney or flue over time," MFS Commander Howard said.

Year	Fire Cause	Number of fires
2012	Chimneys & Flues	78 fires
2013	Chimneys & Flues	25 fires (to date)

MFS Commander, Greg Howard said new home owners or renters should be particularly careful.

"People often move into a property without knowing the full history of the building. In some cases, chimneys or flues may have been installed by an unskilled person, or may have deteriorated over time. That's why a careful clean and inspection by a 'professional' is so important," MFS Commander Howard said.

If you plan to use a combustion heater, gas heater or open fire this winter, the MFS recommends the following safety tips:

- Flues and chimneys should be inspected for damage and cleaned by a qualified person at the beginning of cooler weather
- Always use a fire screen in front of open fires and close combustion heater doors to prevent sparks or embers from coming into contact with carpet, furniture and other combustibles
- Keep any combustibles ideally two metres from a fire place, flue, gas or combustion heater to minimise the threat of a fire starting
- Never leave children or pets unsupervised in a room where an open fire or combustion heater is in use
- Keep matches and lighters well out of reach of children – storage above adult shoulder height and out of sight is recommended
- Never place hot ashes in household bins or council bins – only cold, fully extinguished ashes should be deposited in bins. Have a metal bucket which you use only for ash.

The MFS urges householders to combine the above safety tips with interconnected, photo-electric smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old and a Home Fire Escape Plan.

**For media enquiries and interviews call the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770**

Further information for the public:

Call the MFS Community Education Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours.  
Country callers 1300 737 637.

[www.mfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.mfs.sa.gov.au)