

Minister Tony Piccolo

Minister for Emergency Services

Wednesday, 4 March, 2015

Spike in cigarettes related house fires

A spike in house fires linked to cigarette smoking has prompted the Metropolitan Fire Service to issue a public warning to smokers.

Emergency Services Minister Tony Piccolo said in the last three years MFS and Country Fire Service firefighters have battled more than 500 house fires caused by cigarettes or smoking.

“In the first few weeks of 2015, South Australia has experienced a spike in smoking related house fires,” Minister Piccolo said.

“Already this year, fire crews have responded to 47 house fires linked to cigarettes or smoking. If the trend continues, we’ll reach our annual average for smoking fires in just six months.

“That is why we are urging smokers to follow our home fire safety tips. The last thing we want to see is more property loss or preventable deaths due to carelessly discarded cigarettes. “

MFS Fire Cause Investigators who sift through damaged homes and investigate fatal house fires commonly find the following smoking fire causes:

- People falling asleep while smoking in bed or while resting on a lounge chair or sofa
- Cigarettes not fully extinguished and disposed of in household bins full of combustibles
- Cigarettes left burning unattended on or near combustibles (no ashtrays)
- People smoking indoors and de-activating smoke alarms, meaning the opportunity for early warning of a house fire is lost.

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience Greg Howard said the MFS recommends if smokers follow some important home fire safety tips.

“Firstly, people should use deep, sturdy ashtrays,” Mr Howard said.

“Empty ashtrays frequently into an outside refuse bin ensuring first that all cigarette remnants and matches are extinguished.

“Never smoke in bed or leave lit cigarettes unattended.

“Keep matches and lighters well out of reach of children by storing them above adult shoulder height and out of sight.”

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.

Calendar Year	House fires linked to cigarettes / smoking
2012	137 house fires*
2013	195 house fires*
2014	149 house fires*
2015 (<i>Year to date</i>)	47 house fires* (<i>Year to date</i>)
TOTAL	528 house fires* (<i>January 2012 – February 2015</i>)

**Fires responded to by MFS and/or CFS firefighters*