

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Home heating house fire risk

Thursday, 13 June 2013

With the arrival of cold weather in South Australia, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) warns of the risk of home heating fires.

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Greg Howard, said last winter, MFS and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters responded to **47 house fires linked to home heating**.

“With wintry weather setting in, people are turning to open fires, gas heaters, electric heaters and reverse-cycle air conditioners to keep their homes warm.”

“Just yesterday, MFS firefighters saved a Plympton Park home from a fire caused by a bird’s nest resting on a gas flue within the roof,” MFS Commander Howard said.

“If not carried out safely, home heating carries the risk of house fire. In recent weeks, firefighters have responded to house fires caused by combustibles placed too close to heaters or open fires, embers escaping from an open fire and chimneys or flues that haven’t been cleaned.”

MFS Commander, Greg Howard said, “We’re asking people to keep combustibles including clothes, bedding, furniture and curtains ideally two metres from heat sources, including heaters, flues and open fires. And, **if your heater shows signs of being faulty or not working to its usual capacity, discontinue using it.** Immediately have the heater checked by the manufacturer (or approved repairer), or discard it altogether”.

The MFS recommends the following safety tips to keep warm safely this winter:

- Heating equipment should be installed and maintained by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions
- For portable heating, choose models that have automatic safety switches that turn the heater off if tipped over
- **Keep heaters well clear from any items that could catch on fire. Clearance from clothes, bedding, curtains and other combustibles should ideally be two metres.** Two giant, adult steps is a good rule of thumb
- **Children and pets must be supervised when heaters are in use**
- Keep portable electric heaters away from wet areas to avoid the possibility of electric shock
- Turn off heaters when leaving the house
- Flues and chimneys should be cleaned once a year to prevent a build up of flammable material and ensure your combustion heater functions correctly
- Ensure only the approved fuel is used in liquid-fuelled heaters.

Early detection is vital. 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