

media release



Electric blanket fire risk

Thursday, 12 May 2011

With winter not far away, South Australia's fire services are warning that using damaged or old electric blankets is a fire hazard that could claim your life.

The Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) have already responded to two house fires linked to electric blankets since colder weather began last month.

Sadly, in one of the incidents, an elderly Adelaide woman died after a fire started in the vicinity of an electric blanket controller.

MFS District Officer of Community Safety, Shaun Ruxton said most electric blanket fires are caused by blankets that are worn, have not been checked regularly or have not been operated as specified by the manufacturer.

"The fire services recommend that if an electric blanket is *more than five years old*, it should be checked by the manufacturer.

"The MFS and CFS urge all South Australians to inspect their blankets for signs of wear or damage when getting their electric blankets out of storage for use this winter," District Officer Ruxton said.

CFS Manager Prevention Services, Leigh Miller said people should look for scorch marks, kinks, creases or lumpiness, which may indicate a problem.

"People should also check for damage where the cord attaches to the controller and the blanket, and check the switch for cracking, heat marks or other damage. **If you find any signs of damage, discard the blanket,**" he said.

The MFS and CFS recommend the following safety tips for electric blanket use:

- Always test your electric blankets at the start of winter when you take them out of storage
- To test the blanket, spread it flat, cover with an ordinary blanket and switch on high for 10 to 15 minutes. Run your hand over the blanket to check for hot spots which indicate that the elements may be damaged
- If you find any signs of damage, discard the blanket
- **If an electric blanket is more than five years old, have it checked by the manufacturer**
- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Always use an electric blanket as an under blanket only, to prevent creasing
- Never use an electric blanket with a water bed
- Never tuck an electric blanket under the mattress, fold it over double, crease it or extend it under the pillows - this can cause overheating and scorching
- Never leave clothes piled up on an electric blanket if it is switched on – this can cause overheating and scorching
- Never leave an electric blanket running when you're not home. Electric blankets have started fires when left unattended, or left on during the day
- Turn your electric blanket off **before** getting into bed to ensure your safety.

Early detection is vital. The fire services urge householders to combine the above safety tips with reliable, working smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old and a Home Fire Escape Plan.

**For media enquiries telephone the
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Further information:

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