



Media Release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service

Increase in chimney and flue fires spark safety warning

Tuesday 18 May 2021

As the winter chill sets in, South Australia's Fire Services remind the public to make sure their chimneys and flues are inspected and cleaned to avoid dangerous home heating fires.

Since 1 January 2020, the SA Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and SA Country Fire Service (CFS) have responded to 64 fires linked to chimneys and flues that have caused significant property damage and put lives at risk.

MFS Community Engagement Officer Phil Evans said the increase in chilly nights is prompting people to use open fires, combustion heaters and gas heaters to keep warm.

"Firefighters are responding to fires caused by sparks or embers that have escaped from open fires or that are caused by poorly maintained chimneys and flues."

"The MFS recommends that at the start of each winter you have your chimney or flue inspected to ensure it hasn't become blocked or deteriorated. Some South Australians may consider this a do-it-yourself project, however for the safety of yourself and your family it is important this is completed by a suitably qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions," MFS Community Engagement Officer Phil Evans said.

MFS Community Engagement Officer Phil Evans continued by saying it's essential flues and chimneys are cleaned regularly to prevent a build-up of flammable material.

"If resinous or unseasoned wood is burnt in an open fire, soot and flammable material will build up very quickly. If this is left to accumulate, it has the potential to ignite and cause a serious fire in the home."

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 tradesperson annually.
- 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.
- Inspect the fire bricks that line the fireplace or combustion heater to ensure that there is no deterioration and that the firebricks are properly insulating the area.
- Inspect roof spaces to ensure that the chimney or flue connects safely to the outside of the roof, that the chimney and any protective shrouding is intact and that rubbish in the roof space (vermin nests, leaves, dust etc) has not accumulated around chimneys and flues.

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

For media enquiries please telephone the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770

Members of the public should call the MFS Community Engagement Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours for further information. Country callers 1300 737 637.

