

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## Electric blanket fire safety information!

Wednesday, 12 August 2015

Each winter, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters respond to too many house fires caused by ageing and poorly maintained electric blankets.

MFS Fire Cause Investigator, Simon Hogben said that already this winter six fires have been started by electric blankets.

“During April an Encounter Bay unit was destroyed by fire and the cause was an electric blanket left running in a bedroom for several hours. The elderly occupant was unaware of the fire as the door to the bedroom was closed and there was no smoke alarm in that room. Thankfully the occupant managed to escape with only minor smoke inhalation. Again last night MFS and CFS crews responded to a house fire caused by an electric blanket at Salisbury East with damage totalling \$200,000.

“When used and maintained correctly, electric blankets can be a way for people to pre-warm their beds during winter. The MFS is asking the public to check their electric blankets for signs of wear and tear such as scorch marks, kinks, creases, lumpiness and damage around the cord or controller,” Mr Hogben said.

**If you find any signs of damage, the MFS urges the public to discard the blanket.** If an electric blanket is more than five years old, it should be checked thoroughly by a qualified tradesperson. Consider replacing the blanket if there are any doubts about its safety.

The MFS recommends the following safety tips for electric blanket use:

- Turn your electric blanket off **before** getting into bed to ensure your safety
- Never fold an electric blanket to store it. Roll it up carefully to avoid kinking the element and store safely where nothing will be placed on top - or simply leave it on the bed unplugged. Always test it when you take it 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 or discolouration to the wires, the cord or controller, discard the blanket**
- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Always use an electric blanket as an under blanket only, to prevent creasing – unless the blanket is specifically designed for use as a throw or over blanket
- 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.

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