

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## Fire up to stay warm not burning hot

Friday, 8 July 2016

With wet and wintry conditions upon us, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) is urging the community to ensure that chimneys and flues are in good working order.

In the last three years, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters have responded to 106 chimney, flue or fireplace related house fires across South Australia.

MFS Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Community Safety and Resilience, Phil Kilsby said that poor maintenance of chimneys and flues and the use of green or unseasoned wood and incorrect fuels heighten the risk of dangerous house fires.

“It is critical that anyone with a solid fuel fire, whether it is an open fire or a slow combustion fire, must have their chimney or flue cleaned every year to prevent a build-up of flammable material which could cause a devastating house fire.

“In addition you should never burn treated timber as it releases poisonous fumes and leaves contaminated ash.

“The roof space surrounding the flue must be inspected regularly to ensure insulation, vermin nests, leaves and dust do not accumulate near the flue and that the protective shrouding on the flue is still intact,” said Assistant Chief Fire Officer Kilsby.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Kilsby encouraged those with solid fuel fires to never place ashes in household bins, plastic buckets or council bins. Have a metal bucket which you use only for ash. Let the ash cool completely before disposing of it.

Date	Heating related fires	Chimneys & Flues
Winter 2014	36	46
Winter 2015	32	47
Winter 2016 (to date 6/7/2016)	10	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>106</b>

*Fires responded to by MFS and CFS firefighters, winter season 1 April to 30 September each year.*

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

- Flues and chimneys should be cleaned once a year to prevent a build-up of flammable material and ensure your combustion heater or open fire functions correctly.
- Heating equipment should be installed and serviced by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Keep flammable items well clear from any fires or heaters. Clearance from clothes, bedding, curtains and other combustibles should ideally be two metres. Two giant, adult steps is a good rule of thumb.
- Always have a spark screen around the fireplace or heater. Children and pets must be supervised when fireplaces and heaters are in use.
- Turn heaters off prior to leaving the house and close vents on combustion heaters.
- Ensure outdoor gas heaters and braziers are only used outdoors where there is adequate ventilation for undetectable toxic gasses.

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)