

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Unattended candles cause spate of house fires

Tuesday, 6 December 2016

The South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) is concerned by a recent spate of house fires caused by candles and incense sticks left unattended.

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Greg Howard, says a candle is an open flame which can easily ignite any flammable item nearby.

“In the last month, the MFS has responded to four house fires caused by candles or incense sticks left unattended, located too close to flammables. The combined damage bill for these preventable house fires is \$650,000.

“With the festive season almost upon us we urge those planning to use candles for religious or decorative purposes to never leave them unattended and ensure they are thoroughly extinguished before leaving the room for any reason,” said Commander Howard.

“If you choose to burn candles or incense sticks, keep them well away from items that can catch fire, such as clothing, bedding, books, paper and curtains. Use only sturdy candle holders or incense stick trays which are non-combustible and will not tip over.

“Safer alternatives to candles include battery powered or flameless candles which don’t generate heat,” said Commander Greg Howard.

If people choose to use candles, the MFS offers the following tips:

- If possible use flameless, battery operated LED candles.
- Use incense sticks and candles only with constant adult supervision.
- Keep incense sticks and candles well away from items that can catch fire, such as clothing, bedding, books, paper, curtains etc.
- Extinguish all incense sticks and candles when leaving a room or going to sleep.
- Make sure candles are placed in sturdy holders that will not tip over, on a secure piece of heat-resistant furniture. Candle holders must be made of material that can not burn.
- Use incense stick trays to ensure that falling ash does not come into contact with flammable items.
- Do not place lit incense sticks or candles in windows, where blinds or curtains can close over them.
- Keep incense sticks, candles and all open flames away from flammable liquids.
- Do not use incense sticks or candles in places where they can be knocked over by children or pets.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children.

The fire service urges householders to combine the above safety tips with interconnected, hardwired, photo-electric smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old and a Home Fire Escape Plan.

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

Further information:

MFS Community Education Department **8204 3611** Country callers **1300 737 637**

For deaf and hearing impaired or teletype service **TTY 133 677**

Or visit www.mfs.sa.gov.au