

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## Brighten Xmas with electrical fire safety

Thursday, 21 December 2017

The Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) is urging a merry and bright Christmas by following some simple electrical fire safety tips.

Overloaded electrical circuits, faulty or misused electrical equipment and charging electronic gifts within bedding are key festive season house fire risks the MFS and Country Fire Service (CFS) want you to avoid.

MFS Community Education Officer, Vinny Schar, said decorative Christmas lights, power-boards and charging electronic devices all run the risk of starting preventable house fires if used inappropriately.

“Many families decorate their homes and Christmas trees with colourful light displays and the MFS wants to ensure that if electric powered Christmas lights are used, they are done so safely.

“When decorating a home with festive lights, if more than one item requires power it is important to use a power-board with an overload cut-out feature rather than using double adaptors,” he said

MFS Station Officer Schar said the MFS recognises that technology is a now way of life for many people.

“However devices such as mobile phones, tablets or laptops must never be charged in bed or on flammable materials such as bedding, sofas or armchairs. Always charge devices on a hard, non-combustible surface well away from flammable materials such as soft furnishings, clothing and bedding,” said MFS Station Officer Schar.

Christmas gifts such as remote control drones or cars, also carry a risk of fire if recharging is carried out without allowing the item to cool down first. Once again always ensure the item being charged is not left unattended and is on a non-combustible surface, for example on concrete flooring away from flammable materials.

The MFS offers the following advice for the safe operation of electric equipment:

- Use electrical equipment in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Provide adequate ventilation and never run electrical cords or extension cords under carpets, rugs, bedding. Cords may heat up when covered and over time, cause a fire.
- Regularly check all cables and cords to ensure there is no visible wear or damage and replace any frayed, cracked scorched or damaged electrical or extension cables.
- Discard malfunctioning electrical equipment immediately or have it repaired by a qualified electrician.
- Use power-boards with an overload cut out switch rather than double adaptors.
- Ensure that new electrical items are compliant with an Australian Standard. Look for a Regulatory Compliance Mark and/or the Standards Australia 'five ticks' symbol on the packaging.
- Once a device is fully charged, disconnect charging cables. Extended charging can cause degradation to the battery and increase the risk of overheating.
- Keep all electrical items (including power-boards) free of dust and well clear of any water.

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.

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