

media release



Home Fire Safety Week launched as winter weather bites

HOME FIRE SAFETY WEEK – Monday, 1 June 2020

As winter begins, Home Fire Safety Week is being launched in South Australia to highlight safety measures and a little-known rule for warming outdoor areas.

Icy weather will see many South Australian families lighting fire pits, braziers, chimineas or outdoor combustion heaters to warm up their yards.

The SA Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS), SA Country Fire Service (CFS) and Environment Protection Authority (EPA) are encouraging safe behaviours while alerting people to an often misunderstood rule.

The State's *Burning in the Open* laws mean that residents heating an outdoor area using a solid fuel fire within metropolitan Adelaide or townships can only burn charcoal, not wood.

Minister for Emergency Services, Corey Wingard said as Home Fire Safety Week is launched, **the fire services are encouraging safe behaviours around fire.**

"In winter, many South Australians enjoy warming up outdoor areas with fire pits, braziers, chimineas or outdoor combustion heaters. At night it can be a wonderful family experience to rug up, talk around the fire and look up at the stars.

"But, I'd like to urge everyone to follow the safety advice of the MFS and CFS when lighting up their outdoor fires this winter. A few simple steps can prevent injuries or property damage," Minister Wingard said.

MFS Chief Officer, Michael Morgan said people planning on having an outdoor comfort fire should take a few minutes to address some straightforward safety measures first.

"You must have an extinguishing agent available before you light your fire. If you have a garden hose, ensure it is set up and connected so that it's ready to go in case it's needed in a hurry. Or, have a fire extinguisher at the ready.

"Have a responsible adult present at all times if children will be around the fire. Leaving a young child alone for even a minute can be enough time for accidental burns to occur."

MFS Chief Officer Morgan added, "And, always keep lighters and matches up high, out of the reach and sight of children".

CFS Chief Officer, Mark Jones said no matter where you reside in South Australia, planning a few safety measures can make sure a comfort fire is a safe thing to do.

"Ensure the fire is in a 30 cm deep trench and that it is no larger than one square metre in area. And, have a four-metre cleared space both around and above the fire to prevent it from spreading to vegetation, your home or other property.

"CFS and MFS firefighters stand ready to help the community if a fire gets out of control, but we'd rather the community followed simple safety measures to limit any risks. We encourage people to be sensible and safety conscious," CFS Chief Officer Jones said.

EPA Manager Legislation and Policy, Steven Mudge said if people want to burn wood for a comfort fire within metropolitan Adelaide and townships, they must obtain a permit from their local council.

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MFS Media Line (08) 8204 3770 or the CFS Media Line on (08) 8115 3531**

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“As we have seen with the recent bushfires, wood smoke is a significant air pollutant. Charcoal produces much less smoke than wood, and it allows us to be considerate of neighbours who may have lung or heart conditions that are aggravated by smoke or who may simply not enjoy smoke in their homes.

“However, if the primary purpose of a fire is for cooking a meal, then dry wood, charcoal or dry plant material can be used in any area across the state this winter, so long as the fire is specifically built for that purpose. A good example of this is when barbeques or pizza ovens are in use,” Mr Mudge said.

The penalty for not observing the outdoor heating fire rule across metropolitan Adelaide and townships is a fine of \$300 that can be issued by local councils or SA Police.

The rule to burn charcoal only for outdoor heating fires **has been in place for metropolitan Adelaide since 1994**, with townships progressively coming on board between then and 2016.

Home Fire Safety Week runs from Monday, 1 June until Sunday, 7 June 2020.

MORE INFORMATION

What can I burn when heating an outdoor area? (E.g. in a fire pit, brazier, chiminea or outdoor wood/combustion heater)?

If you are using a fire pit, brazier, chiminea or outdoor wood/combustion heater, you can only burn:

- charcoal – inside metropolitan Adelaide and townships.
- dry wood, charcoal or dry plant material – outside metropolitan Adelaide and townships.

Why am I only allowed to use charcoal when burning inside metropolitan Adelaide or townships for the purposes of heating an outdoor area?

Charcoal produces less smoke than wood and the requirement to use charcoal is to minimise the impacts of smoke on surrounding neighbours and any corresponding health and amenity impacts.

Smoke contains a number of carcinogens and acids that cause heart and lung disease and can inflame existing conditions such as asthma and COPD (emphysema).

If you want to burn wood for a comfort fire, you need a permit from your council.

What is a township in South Australia?

Township boundaries are defined under the Local Government Act by your local council. Contact your Council if you are unsure whether you reside within a township.

For more information about burning in the open, please visit the [EPA website](http://www.epa.sa.gov.au).

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