

media release



Cost of candle fires in the millions, igniting fresh warning for Home Fire Safety Week

Tuesday, 1 June 2021

Preventable candle fires have left a trail of destruction across the state over the past five years, causing almost \$8 million damage to 113 South Australian homes.

To mark the launch of Home Fire Safety Week 2021 – and beginning of winter today – the MFS and CFS have organised a live fire demonstration that shows how quickly a misused candle can engulf a home.

A constructed lounge room will catch alight in a safe environment at the MFS' new \$4.3m Structural Fire Training Facility at Angle Park. The state-of-the-art asset was opened in April.

Minister for Emergency Services, Vincent Tarzia, said it was shocking to learn candle fires had caused \$7.75m damage, destroying homes and forcing South Australians into other accommodation.

"The figures equate to an average damage cost of \$68,584 per candle fire over the past five years," Minister Tarzia said.

"Some might think candles are perfectly safe, but it is crystal clear misused and unattended candles pose a significant risk to lives and property. Our firefighters don't want to see South Australians injured, killed or lose their belongings and home.

"I encourage the community to pay attention and follow the tips provided by authorities throughout Home Fire Safety Week – it could save your life."

Home Fire Safety Week commenced today and runs until Monday, 7 June, with an aim to reduce residential blazes and related deaths and injuries.

Fire authorities estimate 64 people die across Australia in preventable house fires each year while a further 2,000 suffer burn injuries. Tragically, between 5 and 6 people perish in fires in South Australia each year.

MFS Chief Officer Michael Morgan said, despite being popular and creating in-home ambiance, candles bring danger.

"Any open flame – including a candle – has the potential to spread fire in your home and lead to the loss of everything precious to you. Our preference is for people to choose flameless, battery-operated LED candles," he said.

"If you do choose to use candles, we ask that you never leave a candle burning near combustibles like curtains or soft furniture, and never place them on a flammable surface.

"Most importantly, never leave a candle burning unattended. Always extinguish them before you go to sleep."

Country Fire Service (CFS) Chief Officer Mark Jones said candles also present a risk if they're not extinguished properly.

"While most people safely extinguish candles by blowing them out, many don't know the explosive dangers of using water to extinguish a candle. It can be just as dangerous as putting water on a fat fire," he said.

"Putting water on a candle that has burned down into a pool of hot, liquid wax may lead to a rapid expansion of the candle's flame into a ball of fire. This can cause burn injuries and the rapid spread of fire. Never use water on a candle fire."

For more candle fire safety tips, visit the [MFS website here](#).

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

Or visit www.mfs.sa.gov.au and www.cfs.sa.gov.au