

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Heat your home safely, don't burn it!

Tuesday, 21 July 2015

With temperatures on a downward winter spiral, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) warns that with poor maintenance and incorrect use of home heating equipment the risk of dangerous house fires rises.

In the last two years, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters have responded to 516 winter related house fires across South Australia. In fact only yesterday a house was totally destroyed by a radiator being located too close to combustible materials.

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Greg Howard said that ensuring furniture, bedding or washing was kept at least two metres (or two giant steps) away from heaters and open fires was a critical precaution in preventing fires.

"Each year during winter, our firefighters are called out to homes damaged or destroyed by clothes, bedding and furniture catching alight due to the radiant heat of a nearby heater. We've also fought fires after people have become too hot in their beds and unknowingly kicked bedding onto a heater they've left on while they sleep."

"That's why every year we remind the public to take extra care not to put items which can catch fire near heaters of any kind. Clearance from clothes, bedding, curtains and other combustibles should ideally be two metres," MFS Commander Greg Howard said.

Date	Heating related fires
Winter 2014	*82
Winter 2015 (as at 21/07/15)	*37
Total	*119

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

The MFS also warns of the dangers of not maintaining heating equipment correctly.

"Every year, we find people using portable heaters at the beginning of winter without checking to see that they are clean, free of dust and lint, and in good working condition. If you notice faults or signs that your heater isn't working properly, stop using it immediately. Have the heater checked or repaired by a qualified tradesperson, or discard it altogether," MFS Commander Greg Howard said.

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

- Heating equipment should be installed and serviced by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- Gas and oil wall heaters require regular servicing to prevent dust (fluff) build-up
- For portable heating, choose models that have automatic safety switches that turn the heater off if it is tipped over
- **Keep heaters well clear from any items that could catch on fire. Clearance from clothes, bedding, curtains and other combustibles should ideally be two metres.** Two giant, adult steps is a good rule of thumb
- **Children and pets must be supervised when heaters are in use**
- Turn off heaters when leaving the house
- Flues and chimneys should be cleaned once a year to prevent a build-up of flammable material and ensure your combustion heater functions correctly
- Ensure only the approved fuel is used in liquid-fuelled heaters
- Ensure outdoor heaters are only used outdoors where there is adequate ventilation for undetectable toxic gases.

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