

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Chilly winter nights an electric blanket fire risk

Wednesday, 21 August 2013

The Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) warns of an increased risk of electric blanket fires during chilly winter nights.

Each year, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters respond to fires caused by electric blankets across South Australia.

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Greg Howard said that sadly, an elderly Glenelg woman died in a house fire linked to an electric blanket controller in April 2011.

“Many people turn on electric blankets to keep them warm through winter. But most are unaware that faulty, aging or carelessly used electric blankets have the potential to cause serious injuries, claim lives or destroy your home.

“Most electric blanket fires are caused by misuse or by blankets that are worn and old and have not been checked regularly. The MFS urges South Australians to check their electric blankets for signs of wear and tear such as scorch marks, kinks, creases, lumpiness or damage around the cord or controller,” MFS Commander Howard said.

“If you find any signs of damage, discard the blanket. And if an electric blanket is more than five years old, it should be checked thoroughly and replacement considered if there are any doubts about its safety.”

The MFS recommends the following safety tips for electric blanket use:

- Do not fold your electric blankets if you take them off the bed for storage. Always test them when you take them out of storage
- To test the blanket, spread it flat, cover with an ordinary blanket and switch on high for 10 to 15 minutes. Run your hand over the blanket to check for hot spots which indicate that the elements may be damaged
- **If you find any signs of damage or discolouration to the wires, the cord or controller, discard the blanket**
- Always read and follow the manufacturer’s instructions
- Always use an electric blanket as an under blanket only, to prevent creasing – unless the blanket is specifically designed for use as a throw or over blanket
- Never use an electric blanket with a water bed
- Never tuck an electric blanket under the mattress, fold it over double, crease it or extend it under the pillows - this can cause overheating and scorching
- Never leave clothes piled up on an electric blanket if it is switched on – this can cause overheating and scorching
- Never leave an electric blanket running when you’re not home. Electric blankets have started fires when left unattended, or left on during the day
- Turn your electric blanket off **before** getting into bed to ensure your safety.

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