

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## Working smoke alarm saves woman's life

Monday, 31 January 2011

An Adelaide woman who managed to escape her burning home this morning owes her life to working smoke alarms, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) said.

At about 5.20 am today, 20 MFS firefighters responded to a house fire at Findon in Adelaide's west.

The woman had woken to the noise of a smoke alarm sounding to find her home ablaze and thick smoke filling her house, enabling her to evacuate in time.

MFS Fire Cause Investigator, Phil Kilsby has determined the fire was caused by a candle that had been left burning unattended.

"Without working smoke alarms, I do not believe the woman would have woken in time to escape this fire. That's because we lose our sense of smell while we sleep, and the ability to sense smoke.

"This blaze is a reminder to all that **working smoke alarms save lives**, and to **never leave a candle burning unattended**. If you choose to use candles, do not leave combustibles nearby and make sure candles are fully extinguished before leaving a room or going to sleep," Mr Kilsby said.

The MFS urged all householders to ensure they have working smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old. The MFS recommends the following:

- Smoke alarms must comply with Australian Standard 3786
- The best protection is provided by photo-electric smoke alarms which are connected to the mains power supply (i.e. hard-wired)
- **Homes should have smoke alarms in all sleeping areas, in passageways leading to sleeping areas and in living areas**
- Smoke alarms should be interconnected.

If people choose to use candles, here are some simple **home fire safety** tips to follow:

- **Extinguish all candles when leaving a room or going to sleep**
- Do not place lit candles in windows, where blinds or curtains can catch fire
- Keep the immediate area around a candle clear of all items, especially items that can catch fire, such as clothing, books, paper, tablecloths
- Make sure candles are placed in sturdy holders that will not tip over, and place them on a secure piece of heat-resistant furniture. Candle holders must be non-combustible
- Keep candles and open flames away from flammable liquids
- Use candles only with constant adult supervision
- Do not use candles in places where they can be knocked over by children or pets.

The MFS urges householders to combine the above safety tips with a Home Fire Escape Plan.

For more information about **smoke alarms**, **home fire safety** and **candle safety** visit [www.mfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.mfs.sa.gov.au)

**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.

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