



## Home fire safety fact sheet

### Electric Blankets

All electric blankets sold in Australia must comply with strict safety standards to meet AS/NZS 3350.2.17:2000. However, careless use can cause electric shock, fire, or even death.

Problems and incidents usually occur in blankets which are misused or are worn and old and have not been checked regularly for damage. This information sheet explains how to use electric blankets safely, how to care for them and how to recognise the signs of damage.

#### Using Electric Blankets

- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Always use the electric blanket as an under blanket unless it is specifically designed for use as an over-blanket.
- Never use an electric blanket with a water bed.
- Never use pins – they can damage the blanket's wiring.
- Never tuck an electric blanket under the mattress, never fold it over double, crease it, or extend it under the pillows. This can cause overheating and scorching.
- Never leave clothes piled on an electric blanket if it is switched on - this can cause overheating and scorching.
- Always switch off an electric blanket after use. Electric blankets have started fires when left unattended, or left on during the day.
- Never use an electric blanket when it's wet. Incontinent people should not use electric blankets.
- Never place a baby on an electric blanket - they can dehydrate and get burns at fairly low temperatures.
- Never use electric blankets with people who are sensitive to heat. Invalids and people who are frail or elderly could dehydrate, especially if they can't turn the blanket off when in difficulty.

## Blanket Care

- Never wash or dry clean an electric blanket unless the manufacturer's instructions indicate that it is a "washable" type which can be laundered. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. For all other blankets clean the blanket only when soiled - sponge lightly and allow to dry naturally on a flat surface.
- Never fold an electric blanket to store it. Roll it up carefully to avoid kinking the elements and store safely where nothing will be placed on top - or simply leave it on the bed switched off and unplugged.
- Regularly inspect your blankets for wear or damage:
  - Look for scorch marks, kinks, creases or lumpiness which may indicate a problem.
  - Check for damage where the cord attaches to the controller and the blanket, and check the switch for cracking, discolouration, heat marks or other damage.
  - As a final check, spread the blanket flat, cover with an ordinary blanket to retain the heat, and switch on to high for 10 - 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, have the blanket checked by the manufacturer.
- Always test your electric blankets at the start of winter when you take them out of storage.
- If an electric blanket is more than 5 years old, have it checked by the manufacturer.
- Always tie the electric blanket to the mattress using the tapes provided, and smooth out any wrinkles or creases.
- Never strain or twist the electric blanket's power cord, or let it drape where it may be damaged by a bed leg or castor.
- Turn the electric blanket off when you get into bed. Do not leave it turned on overnight.

## Electric Throw Rugs

- Electric throw rugs are an electrical appliance and should be used with care.
- Read all instructions before use.
- Regularly inspect your electric throw rug for wear or damage – see "Blanket Care" above.
- Use as an over blanket and not as an under-blanket.
- Do not use in bed and do not fall asleep while using the throw rug.
- Do not use bunched up, creased or folded.

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- Never use electric throw rugs with people who are sensitive to heat. Invalids and people who are frail or elderly could dehydrate, especially if they can't turn the blanket off when in difficulty.
- Never use an electric throw rug with a baby - they can dehydrate and get burns at fairly low temperatures.
- Do not use if wet.
- Carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding washing and drying.
- Remove the controller before washing.
- Do not cover the controller when in use.
- Never fold an electric throw rug to store it. Roll it up carefully to avoid kinking the elements and store safely where nothing will be placed on top.
- If an electric throw rug is more than 5 years old, have it checked by the manufacturer.