

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Don't play with fire: Check chimneys and flues

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Recent cold snaps are a reminder to the public to make sure their chimneys and flues are inspected and cleaned if they have not done so this year.

Every year, the SA Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and SA Country Fire Service (CFS) respond to dozens of fires linked to chimneys and flues that have caused significant property damage and put lives at risk.

Year	Number of chimney and flue fires
2018	50
2019	24
2020 until June 13	14

MFS Community Engagement Officer Phil Evans said common causes of these fires were poorly maintained or inspected chimneys and flues.

“A lot of South Australians may consider do-it-yourself projects at this time but the installation and maintenance of flues and chimneys must be undertaken by a qualified tradesperson,” MFS Community Engagement Officer Evans said.

“Flues and chimneys must be cleaned regularly to prevent a build-up of soot and flammable material. Maintenance checks should be completed at least once a year, ideally at the start of cold weather.”

After a number of recent fires in suburban Adelaide, MFS Community Engagement Officer Evans said hot ashes should be disposed of in a metal bucket instead of dumping them in household bins.

“Nothing is more comforting than having a fireplace or a combustion heater warming your home, but be mindful of safety when using them and keep clothes, curtains, furniture and other combustibles at least two metres away from the fire,” MFS Community Engagement Officer Evans said.

“MFS firefighters have already attended several fires this year caused by ash that had not cooled completely before being disposed of and which later ignited in household bins.”

If you plan to use a combustion heater, gas heater or open fire this winter, the MFS recommends the following safety tips:

- Flues and chimneys should be inspected for damage and cleaned by a qualified tradesperson annually
- Always use a fire screen in front of open fires and close combustion heater doors to prevent sparks or embers from coming into contact with carpet, furniture and other combustibles
- Check and clean flues and chimneys to prevent a build-up of flammable material inside the chimney. If resinous or unseasoned wood is burnt in an open fire soot and flammable material will build up very quickly. The chimney must then be cleaned more frequently
- Inspect the fire bricks that line the fireplace or combustion heater to ensure that there is no deterioration and that the firebricks are properly insulating the area
- Inspect roof spaces to ensure that the chimney or flue connects safely to the outside of the roof, that the chimney and any protective shrouding is intact and that rubbish in the roof space (vermin nests, leaves, dust etc) has not accumulated around chimneys and flues.

The MFS urges householders to combine the above safety tips with interconnected 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

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