

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Hot weather prompts air-con warning

Wednesday, 13 February 2013

With South Australia expected to swelter over coming days, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) is warning of an increased risk of house fires caused by air conditioners.

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Allan Foster said if electrical air cooling equipment is used continuously throughout prolonged heat events, there is a danger of the equipment overheating and causing a fire.

“In previous heat events, MFS firefighters and CFS volunteers have responded to multiple house and business fires caused by malfunctioning or poorly maintained air cooling equipment.”

“I’d like to make it clear that the MFS **does not discourage** the use of electrical air cooling equipment, as it can be a necessary health requirement during hot weather. However, there are some simple tips people can follow to stay safe and cool,” MFS Commander Foster said.

“The MFS advises people to have a spare, well maintained fan at home to keep comfortable while resting overheated cooling equipment,” MFS Commander Foster said.

You can reduce the potential for fire in the following ways:

- Electrical cooling equipment such as air conditioners and evaporative coolers should be installed by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.
- All electrical cooling equipment, both permanently installed systems and portable equipment, should be regularly serviced by a licensed tradesperson according to the manufacturer’s specifications.
- Arrange to have your equipment serviced so that it is fully functional when the hot weather begins.
Ask the tradesperson to check for faults, remove any build up of dust or combustible material and ensure the equipment is in good working order.
- Do not leave your air cooling equipment running unattended while not at home.
- Watch for signs of your electrical cooling equipment overheating. Keep a spare, well maintained fan that can keep you cool while resting overheated cooling equipment.
- If you have an older air conditioner without a regulating thermostat, consider replacing it with one that has a regulating thermostat.
- Keep portable electrical cooling equipment away from wet areas to avoid the possibility of electric shock.
- Children must be supervised when cooling equipment is in use. Keep an eye on children and pets, particularly when portable equipment is within reach.

The MFS urges householders to combine the above safety tips with 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