

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Winter brings reminder of fire safety advice

Monday, 11 May 2020

As winter approaches, the SA Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) reminds the public to check their heating appliances for damage or wear before use.

Combustion heaters, fireplaces and electric blankets may pose a significant fire risk if they are not checked carefully.

Every year in South Australia, the MFS and SA Country Fire Service (CFS) respond to an average of 21 fires related to gas or electric heaters and another 13 fires related to solid fuel heaters and open fires.

MFS Community Engagement Officer Phil Evans said heating equipment with faults, damage or wear should be repaired or replaced.

“People are pulling out electric blankets and heaters they have not used since last spring so these items need to be thoroughly checked before use,” Community Engagement Officer Evans said.

“Do not use any faulty heating equipment. Immediately discard faulty heaters or electric blankets, or have them repaired by a qualified tradesperson.

“Gas or oil heaters, fireplaces, chimneys and flues should be serviced and cleaned regularly.”

When using heating equipment, Community Engagement Officer Evans recommended key safety tips that could save lives and prevent property loss.

“Keep any combustible items such as clothes, bedding, curtains or furniture well clear of heaters and fires – with ideally at least two metres clearance,” Community Engagement Officer Evans said.

“Avoid leaving heaters running for extended periods of time as radiant heat may scorch flammable items.”

MFS electric blanket and throw rugs safety tips:

- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions while using electric blankets or throw rugs.
- Always check and test your electric blanket or rug at the start of winter. Look for scorch marks, kinks, creases, lumpiness or exposed wires in electric blankets. Check for cracking, discolouration, heat marks on the switch and the cord that connects the controller to the blanket.
- Electric blankets have started fires when left unattended, or left on during the day. Remember as you get into bed, turn off the electric blanket.
- Never use electric blankets with people who are sensitive to heat, including infants and young children. Invalids and people who are frail or elderly could dehydrate, especially if they can’t turn the blanket off when in difficulty.

MFS heater fire safety tips:

- Heating equipment should be installed and maintained by a qualified tradesperson.
- Clothes airers placed around or near heaters are a high fire risk. If clothing needs to be dried inside it is far safer to locate the clothes airer in a room with no heater but a good air flow.
- Children and pets must always be supervised when heaters and fires are in use.
- Choose a portable heater that has an automatic safety switch that turns the heater off if it is tipped over.

For further information, please access our MFS Home Fire and Life Safety Fact Sheets on Home Heating and Electric Blankets at www.mfs.sa.gov.au

For media enquiries and interviews call the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770

www.mfs.sa.gov.au