

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## Damaging garage fires prompt Spring fire safety warning

09 September 2021

Over the last three years shed and garage fires have cost South Australian householders over \$6 million per year in damages, prompting a Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) safety warning.

MFS and SA Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters have battled 370 shed and garage fires across the state with a collective damage bill of over \$19 million, over the past three years.

One of the latest blazes, a \$300,000 fire at Greenwith on 1 September is believed to have been caused when a spark ignited from petrol vapours whilst the owner was working on their boat in the garage.

Although the owner did all the right things by ensuring the garage was well ventilated, the petrol vapours ignited with the fire engulfing the boat within a minute. It is fortunate that there were no serious injuries to the family of five who managed to evacuate safely.

MFS Community Engagement Officer, Douglas MacDonald-Taylor said sheds and garages often contain a mixture of dangerous items that could lead to fires.

“Sheds and garages are often stocked with LPG cylinders, paint thinners, oils, fuel, butane cans, rechargeable batteries, pool and cleaning chemicals. Sparks can ignite fuel, paint thinners, cleaning products or solvents or their vapour, leading to a fire.

“Refuel and use fuel only in a well-ventilated area and not near any open flame. Some sheds or garages are also used as sleep-outs that have heating and cooking facilities, which brings added risks.”

“We’re urging the community to be mindful of what their sheds and garages contain, and to have safe procedures when using power tools, handling chemicals, fuel, oil or gas cylinders. If your shed or garage is used as a sleep-out, we strongly encourage you to install a working smoke alarm,” MFS Community Engagement Officer, Douglas MacDonald-Taylor said.

The MFS reminds the public of the following key safety tips for sheds and garages:

- NEVER tinker with LPG or other gas cylinders. If you’re unsure of the age, condition or contents of a cylinder, discontinue using them and replace them with a new cylinder in good condition.
- Ensure any work you conduct that might cause sparks is well clear of any combustibles.
- Do not refuel lawn mowers or other tools while the appliance is running or still hot.
- Use a directional funnel to prevent fuel spills and clean up spills immediately. Do not overfill containers or tanks.
- Do not smoke while refuelling a lawn mower or other tools.
- Granular pool chlorine must be stored away from fuels, oils, brake fluid or detergents due to the risk of fire if the containers disintegrate or develop leaks over time.
- Rags that have been used with petrol, methylated spirits, turpentine, white spirit, acetone, solvent based glues or petroleum based paint thinners should be dried in a well ventilated area (to remove the volatile gases) before disposal.
- Rags that have been used with drying oils such as linseed oil or oil-based paints may self-heat and spontaneously ignite. Immerse rags in water or spread out in a safe place to dry immediately after use.

The MFS provides comprehensive home fire safety tips on [hazardous materials](#), [barbeques](#), [electrical hazards](#), [self heating and spontaneous ignition](#) and [cooking](#) at [www.mfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.mfs.sa.gov.au)

**For media enquiries please telephone the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770**

Members of the public should call the MFS Community Education Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours for further information. Country callers 1300 737 637.

[www.mfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.mfs.sa.gov.au)

**Follow us on Twitter: @SA\_MFS**