



# Media Release

## **\$7m in house fire damage linked to lithium-ion battery misuse**

**HOME FIRE SAFETY WEEK: Wednesday, 7 June 2023 #HFSW2023 #HFSW23**

Volatile lithium-ion battery fires are a growing house fire trend that the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) warns is down to the misuse of batteries and chargers.

Lithium-ion batteries are becoming commonplace in household appliances, children's toys, e-bikes, power tools – and, even lawn mowers.

That's seen MFS and SA Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters respond to **74 house, garage and shed fires** in three years, that have left a **\$7.02m damage bill** and *risks* injuries or deaths.

MFS Community Engagement Officer, Phil Evans said each time these fires are investigated, they're almost always found to be caused by dangerous decisions that should never have happened.

"These fires are caused by people using incompatible or non-genuine batteries or chargers, by people building their own batteries and chargers - or by the overcharging of batteries for days or weeks.

"The other common cause is due to people persisting with using faulty chargers and batteries, or constantly charging an old battery that no longer holds its charge.

"NEVER buy electrical items on the internet from an overseas or little-known trader, as you won't know if the battery and charger meet Australian standards," MFS Community Engagement Officer Evans said.

The MFS warns that the unpredictability of a lithium-ion battery fire means people should not attempt to move a burning battery outdoors, due to the risk of explosion.

"Our firefighters have heard from people who've had narrow misses, including a burning e-bike that exploded in a house and blew out the windows. Thankfully the occupants had decided to evacuate the house moments earlier – without the bike.

"The message is clear – NEVER touch, move nor try to extinguish a lithium-ion battery fire. No matter how small the fire might seem, the risk of explosion and release of toxic vapours and gasses is high. Instead, evacuate immediately and call 000 (Triple Zero)," MFS Community Engagement Officer Phil Evans said.

Our top tips when it comes to lithium-ion batteries are:

- ALWAYS use **genuine, compatible** batteries and chargers
- NEVER overcharge batteries (for days or weeks at a time)
- NEVER try to build your own battery
- ALWAYS buy genuine, compliant replacement batteries and chargers from reputable Australian retailers, avoid online purchases. Do NOT mix and match
- Ensure you have working smoke alarms in your home that are less than 10 years old.

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