



Home fire safety fact sheet

Home Heating

Reduce the risk of fire from heating appliances and fires by:

- correctly installing, maintaining and using heating devices;
- supervising children and pets when heaters are in use;
- maintaining safe clearances from the appliance; and
- always using the correct fuels.

The following fire safety tips are recommended:

General Tips

- Heating equipment should be installed by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and any relevant Australian Standard.
- Maintenance of heating equipment (including gas heaters, oil heaters and air conditioners) should be carried out as recommended by the manufacturer using a qualified tradesperson. Discontinue use of any faulty heating equipment immediately. Have faulty equipment repaired by a qualified tradesperson or replace it with a new item.
- Keep any items that can burn well clear of heaters and fires. Clearance from clothes, bedding, furniture, curtains, and other combustibles ideally should be two metres.
- Clothes airers placed around or near heaters are a high fire risk. If they fall over clothing can land on, or dangerously close to the heater. 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. A clothes airer can be placed in a heated room only if it is well clear of the heater – a minimum of two metres.
- Turn heating equipment off when you leave the house, and do not leave running for extended periods of time unless the appliance is specifically designed for that purpose. Over an extended period of time the heat produced from a heater can scorch combustible items, eventually leading to a fire.
- Children and pets must always be supervised when heaters and fires are in use.

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Portable Heaters

- Choose a portable heater that has an automatic safety switch that turns the heater off if it is tipped over.
- Keep portable electric heaters away from wet areas to avoid the possibility of electric shock.

Open Fires And Combustion Heaters

- Always use a full-size fire screen in front of open fires to prevent sparks or embers coming into contact with carpet, furniture or other combustible items.
- Always keep children at a safe distance from the fire or combustion heater to reduce the chance of them stumbling or falling into the fire.
- Combustion heaters must have the door latched shut when in use.
- Never use flammable liquids to start the fire.
- Never burn wood that has been chemically treated.
- Never place hot ashes in household bins, plastic buckets or council bins. Have a metal bucket which you use only for ash. Let the ash cool completely before disposing of it.
- Keep fire lighting tools (matches, lighters and stove lighters) well out of reach and out of sight of children.

Gas And Liquid Fuelled Heaters

- Gas heaters must be installed by a qualified tradesperson.
- Gas heaters must be vented adequately as the carbon monoxide produced by burning is odourless, colourless and poisonous.
- It is particularly important to have gas heaters serviced regularly by a qualified tradesperson to ensure that there are no carbon monoxide leaks.
- Gas fuelled patio and outdoor heaters **must never** be used indoors. Take care when using them outside to ensure that there is adequate space around them from combustible items such as pull down blinds.

If the area is enclosed by pull-down blinds you must also ensure adequate ventilation to avoid the build-up of carbon monoxide.

- Ensure only the approved fuel is used in liquid-fuelled heaters (eg kerosene heaters) and ensure that there is adequate ventilation.
- Store liquid fuel safely and securely, away from heat sources. Avoid keeping large quantities of fuel in the house.

Ethanol Fireplaces

(also known as ethanol burners or decorative alcohol fuelled devices)

- Ethanol fuelled fireplaces must be installed by a qualified installer in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. There must be a minimum of one metre clearance from all combustible material around the fireplace and they must be securely mounted.
- Only choose brands and models which have been tested and certified.
- Whilst ethanol fireplaces do not require flues or chimneys the room must be adequately ventilated. Without sufficient oxygen the ethanol will not burn properly and may produce carbon monoxide – an odourless, colourless and poisonous gas.

- Ethanol fireplaces are similar to an open fire in that:
 - children and pets must be supervised at all times when they are in use; and
 - they get hot and can cause burns if touched when in use.
- Never re-fuel an ethanol fireplace while it is alight or hot.

The fireplace must be allowed to cool completely before being refuelled; the ethanol fuel can ignite on contact with the hot surface, as illustrated in the following video clip.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMp46b5drPM>

You put yourself and others at risk of serious burns as well as the risk of starting a house fire.

- Use a leak proof filling container to avoid fuel spills. Do not overfill the tank. Completely clean up any fuel spills before lighting.
- Never use any other form of liquid fuel in an ethanol fireplace; use only approved ethanol fuel.
- Store liquid fuel safely and securely, away from heat sources. Avoid keeping large quantities of fuel in the house.
- Please note in July 2017 the Australian Government introduced the Consumer Goods (Decorative Alcohol Fuelled Devices) Safety Standard 2017. All devices sold after 15th July 2017 must comply with this Standard.

For copies of the Safety Standard go to <https://www.legislation.gov.au> and search "Decorative Alcohol Fuelled Devices".

For more information about these devices go to <https://www.productsafety.gov.au> and search "Decorative Alcohol Fuelled Devices."

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Maintenance Of Fireplaces, Combustion Heaters, Flues And Chimneys

Regular maintenance of fireplaces, combustion heaters, flues and chimneys must be undertaken by a qualified person a minimum of once a year (at the start of the cold weather) to ensure that the heater or fireplace works properly and safely. This maintenance should include:

- Checking and cleaning 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.
- Inspecting 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.
- Inspecting the heat baffles in flues and chimneys to ensure that they have not rusted or deteriorated in any way.
- Inspecting 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.

Ducted Heating

- Return air filters must be cleaned regularly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- The heating unit must be serviced regularly by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Never hesitate to call 000 even if you think that the fire is out.

There is no charge for fire service attendance for a fire event.