



Home fire safety fact sheet

Therapeutic Wheat Bags

Wheat bags are fabric bags filled with wheat (or other grains). They are heated in a microwave oven and then placed on the body to apply warmth. Wheat bags or wheat pillows are often used to provide relief from the body's aches and pains, but if they are used incorrectly they are also a fire and a burn hazard.

If a wheat bag is over-heated in the microwave the contents can begin to smoulder. The likelihood of ignition is increased if the wheat bag is insulated with blankets or a quilt when being used to warm a bed. For this reason the SA Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) does **NOT** recommend using wheat bags as 'hot water bottles' to warm a bed.

In addition, burns to the skin may occur with an over-heated wheat bag especially if it is being used on a baby, young child or an elderly person.

The MFS recommends that the following fire and life safety guidelines be applied when using these products:

- Do not overheat wheat bags. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use wheat bags only as a heat pack for direct application to the body. **Do not use them as bed warmers.**
- Do not use wheat bags in bed to avoid the danger of falling asleep whilst they are in use.
- Use wheat bags with extreme caution with the elderly.
- Do **NOT** use wheat bags with babies or young children.
- Do not reheat until the wheat bag has completely cooled. Reheating before the bag has cooled may be just as dangerous as overheating.
- Watch for these signs of over-use: an over-cooked odour; a smell of burning; or, in extreme cases, smoking and/or charring. Discard the wheat bag after cooling if you observe any of these signs.
- Do not put wheat bags into storage until they are cold. Leave them to cool on a non-combustible surface such as a kitchen sink.