

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## \$1.5m in summer cooling fires prompts MFS warning

Wednesday, 1 March 2017

Fire involving electrical air cooling equipment has caused nearly \$1.5 million damage in South Australia this summer, prompting the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) to urge householders to have their equipment serviced by a qualified tradesperson.

MFS and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters have responded to **12** fires across the state caused by air conditioners, evaporative coolers and fans, leaving \$1.429m in property damage since 1 December.

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Greg Howard said most of the fires involved poor maintenance or people ignoring warning signs.

“We’re urging householders and business owners to have their air conditioners, evaporative coolers and fans **serviced by a qualified tradesperson** now, if they hadn’t already this summer.”

“With bursts of hot weather likely to continue into Autumn, a service by a professional according to the manufacturer’s instructions will help your air cooling equipment withstand the heat.”

MFS Fire Cause Investigators have noticed that in some cases, householders have ignored warning signs and persisted with using air cooling equipment, leading to a fire.

“If your air conditioner or evaporative cooler is making a lot of noise, keeps shutting itself down or is not operating as it should, that’s a sign you should stop using it until it’s been serviced by a professional,” MFS Commander Howard said.

**Importantly**, the MFS **does not discourage** the use of electrical air cooling equipment as it can be a necessary health requirement for the elderly or families with young children.

You can reduce the potential for fire in the following ways:

- All electrical cooling equipment, both permanently installed systems and portable equipment, should be regularly serviced by a licensed tradesperson according to the manufacturer’s specifications.
- Ask the tradesperson to check for faults, remove any build up of dust or combustible material and ensure the equipment is in good working order.
- Do not leave your air cooling equipment running unattended while not at home.
- Watch for signs of your portable electrical cooling equipment overheating. Keep a spare, well maintained fan that can keep you cool while resting overheated cooling equipment.
- If you have an older air conditioner without a regulating thermostat, consider replacing it with one that has a regulating thermostat.
- Electrical cooling equipment such as air conditioners and evaporative coolers should be installed by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Keep portable electrical cooling equipment away from wet areas to avoid the possibility of electric shock.
- Children must be supervised when using portable cooling equipment that is within reach.

The fire service urges householders to combine the above safety tips with interconnected, photo-electric smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old and a Home Fire Escape Plan.

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

**Further information for the public:**

Call the MFS Community Education Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours.  
Country callers 1300 737 637.

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