

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Prepare chimneys and flues for winter

Monday, 10 April 2017

As the autumn nights begin to cool down, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) is reminding the public to arrange for chimneys and flues to be checked and cleaned before winter officially arrives.

Already this year MFS and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters have responded to fires caused by poorly maintained chimneys, flues or fireplaces.

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Greg Howard said that not maintaining chimneys and flues every year heightens the risk of dangerous house fires.

“Anyone with a solid fuel fire, regardless of whether it is an open fire or a slow combustion heater, must have their flues, chimneys and fireplaces checked and cleaned by a qualified person at least once a year to prevent a dangerous build-up of flammable material inside the chimney.

“It’s critical that the actual fireplace is inspected to ensure that the fire bricks that line the fireplace or combustion heater have not deteriorated and the area is properly insulated. During this inspection the heat baffles in flues and chimneys must also be checked to ensure they have not deteriorated and are in good working order.

“The roof space surrounding the flue should also be checked to ensure insulation, vermin nests, leaves and dust do not come into contact with the flue and that the protective shrouding on the flue is still intact,” said Commander Howard.

Commander Howard strongly discouraged the use of resinous or green wood, which can cause a build-up of soot and flammable materials, and of treated wood which emits poisonous fumes.

Hot ashes must never be placed directly into household bins, plastic buckets or council bins. Have a metal bucket which you use only for ash and let the ash cool completely before disposing of it.

The MFS recommends the following safety tips to keep warm safely this winter.

- Flues, chimneys and fireplaces should be cleaned once a year to prevent a build-up of flammable material and ensure your combustion heater or open fire functions correctly.
- Heating equipment should be installed and serviced by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Keep flammable items well clear from any fires or heaters. Clearance from clothes, bedding, curtains and other combustibles should ideally be two metres. Two giant, adult steps is a good rule of thumb.
- Always have a spark screen around the fireplace or heater. Children and pets must be supervised when fireplaces and heaters are in use.
- Turn heaters off prior to leaving the house and close vents on combustion heaters.

Early detection is vital. The MFS recommends that all homes are fitted with interconnected, hardwired, photo-electric smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old and the occupants have a practised Home Fire Escape Plan.

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.

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