

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Using electric blankets safely

Thursday, 6 July 2017

Old, worn old or incorrectly used electric blankets carry the risk of causing a house fire, leading the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) to issue a home fire safety warning.

Each winter, MFS and Country Fire Service firefighters respond to costly and potentially deadly house fires linked to electric blanket misuse, including blankets that are mistakenly left on for too long.

MFS Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Community Safety and Resilience, Glenn Benham said all electric blankets sold in Australia must comply with Australian Standard AS/NZS 3350.2.17.2000, however how the product is used once taken out of the box can significantly impact its safety.

“Before winter use, the MFS recommends visually checking electric blankets for signs of wear and tear such as scorch marks, wires protruding or damage around the cord or controller. **If any sign of damage is found, discard the blanket immediately.**”

“Once you’re satisfied there is no visible damage, spread the blanket flat, cover with an ordinary blanket to retain the heat, plug in and turn to high for 10 - 15 minutes. Run your hand over the blanket to check for hot spots which indicate that the elements may be damaged,” he said.

MFS Assist Chief Benham said, “It’s important to remember that electric blankets should be used to pre-warm a bed and only ever as an under-blanket unless specifically designed for use as an over-blanket.

“Always switch off an electric blanket when you get into bed. Fires have started when electric blankets have been left on unattended during the day,” said MFS Assistant Chief Benham.

The MFS recommends the following safety tips for electric blanket use:

- Turn your electric blanket off **before** getting into bed to ensure your safety.
- Never fold an electric blanket to store it. Roll it up carefully to avoid kinking the element and store safely where nothing will be placed on top - or simply leave it on the bed unplugged and tied down securely. Always test it when you take it out of storage.
- To test the blanket, spread it flat, cover with an ordinary blanket and switch on high for 10 to 15 minutes. Run your hand over the blanket to check for hot spots which indicate that the elements may be damaged.
- **If you find any signs of damage or discolouration to the wires, the cord or controller, discard the blanket.**
- Always read and follow the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Always use an electric blanket as an under blanket only, to prevent creasing – unless the blanket is specifically designed for use as a throw or over blanket.
- Never use an electric blanket with a water bed.
- Never tuck an electric blanket under the mattress, never fold it over double, crease it or extend it under the pillows as this can cause overheating and scorching.
- Never leave clothes piled up on an electric blanket if it is switched on as this can cause overheating and scorching.
- Never leave an electric blanket running when you’re not home. Electric blankets have started fires when left unattended, or left on during the day.

Early detection is vital. The MFS 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 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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