

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



\$2.5m fire spate prompts MFS air cooling safety warning

Thursday, 01 November 2018

As the weather heats up, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) urges the public to have air cooling equipment serviced before summer to avoid adding to an estimated \$2.5 million in property loss.

Since 1 January, the MFS and Country Fire Service (CFS) have battled 17 fires caused by air conditioners, evaporative coolers and fans, resulting in the significant damage bill.

MFS Acting Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Vinny Schar explained that many of the fires could have been avoided if the proper maintenance and care was taken before use.

“Unfortunately some people miss or ignore the warning signs when an air conditioner or evaporative cooler begins to fail. If it 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 qualified tradesperson.”

“With spring warming up and in the lead up to summer, it is vital that air cooling equipment is serviced by a professional according to the manufacturer’s instructions to avoid the potential for a fire to start within your home or business. Ultimately, it’s about keeping those you care about safe.”

MFS Acting Commander Schar continued by saying, “It is also important not to leave your cooling equipment running unattended while you’re not at home. Also, keep portable electrical cooling equipment away from wet areas to avoid the possibility of electric shock.”

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 should be installed and 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.
- 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.
- Children must be supervised when using portable cooling equipment that is within their reach.

The fire service urges householders to combine the above safety tips with working, interconnected 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.

www.mfs.sa.gov.au

Follow us on Twitter: @SA_MFS