

News Release

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Government
of South Australia

Hon Gail Gago

Minister for State/Local Government

Relations

Minister for the Status of Women

Minister for Consumer Affairs

Minister Government Enterprises

Minister Ast Minister for Transport, Infrastructure & Energy

Thursday, 2nd April 2009

NEW SAFETY STANDARD PROPOSED FOR INSULATION INSTALLERS

A mandatory safety standard for installing insulation has been earmarked by the Rann Government after two house fires in SA were blamed on incorrectly installed insulation.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Gail Gago says feedback on a proposed new safety standard is now being canvassed from installers and related industry associations with almost 300 letters sent by the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) this week.

“A safety standard is clearly warranted after the Metropolitan Fire Service attributed two roof space fires in Adelaide to incorrectly installed blow-in insulation,” says Minister Gago.

“It is obvious that a voluntary standard is not providing the level of protection that South Australians deserve and we will work with the bulk insulation industry to introduce a workable arrangement that offers greater safety.

“The standard will be further supported by a potential penalty of up to \$10,000 for any breaches of the standard.”

Working in conjunction with the Office of the Technical Regulator (OTR), OCBA is developing a safety standard that is based on the voluntary Australian Standard ‘Thermal insulation of dwellings - bulk insulation - Installation requirements’. OCBA proposes to introduce this safety standard under section 23 of the *Trade Standards Act 1979* by mid year.

“I must stress that blow-in or bulk insulation is not a safety concern in itself, provided it is installed correctly,” says Minister Gago.

“The main safety issues appear to be with the incorrect installation of loose fill or blow-in insulation, however, any type of insulation installed too close or covering electrical devices, such as down lights and fans, can cause them to overheat and start a fire.”

With an anticipated increase in households installing insulation, including as a result of the Federal Government’s new energy efficiency measures, OCBA is concerned that inexperienced and untrained installers could be attracted to the market, highlighting the need to address potential safety risks in advance.

OCBA and the OTR have been liaising with the Federal Government and welcome its inclusion of safe installation practices as part of the eligibility conditions for its program, and also the work

underway to develop an installer training framework. This reinforces a second layer of consumer protection for people having insulation retro-fitted.

Anyone who installs insulation in SA is required to be licensed under the *Building Work Contractors Act 1995*.

“The proposed safety standard will likely include basic safety requirements, such as clearances around electrical fittings and wiring in ceiling spaces, use of fire resistant barriers to protect electrical devices and ensuring loose-fill insulation is properly restrained. It is expected that compliance should not be overly onerous for installers,” says the Minister.

“All consumers who are considering installing insulation should ensure the work is done by a licensed contractor.”

Consumers with concerns about existing installations of blow-in insulation, where down lights or exhaust fans are present, should arrange for a licensed electrician to inspect the work.

Should you wish to comment or receive further information about the proposed safety standard regulation please contact OCBA’s Product Safety section by **17 April 2009** on 8152 0732 or write to:

Office of Consumer and Business Affairs
Product Safety Section
GPO Box 1719
Adelaide SA 5001

For information about licensed building work contractors licence contact OCBA’s licensing section on 8204 9644 or 131 882 (country callers).

For further information contact Nicole Thomas on 8463 3431 or 0488 588 710
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