

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Candles a Christmas house fire risk

Monday, 23 December 2013

Australians love brightening Christmas with candles, but to Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) firefighters they're a house fire danger, especially over the festive season.

Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Glenn Benham said while candles create a beautiful atmosphere, they have the potential to claim homes and lives.

"Christmas is a time when candles are likely to be left unattended or forgotten altogether due to distractions such as socialising, phone calls, parties, presents, alcohol and afternoon naps."

"That's why the MFS recommends the use of battery-operated artificial candles *instead of* real candles to reduce the risk of a devastating house fire starting," MFS Assistant Chief Fire Officer Benham said.

In recent years Metropolitan Fire Service and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters have responded to candle fires that have left a collective damage bill of nearly \$2 million – while saving property worth many millions more.

Financial Year	Property damage caused by candle fires in South Australia
2010-11	\$640,000 damage*
2011-12	\$495,000 damage*
2012-13	\$760,000 damage*
TOTAL	\$1,895,000 total damage bill*

* Collective damage bill for candle fires investigated by MFS Fire Cause Investigators across SA.

Candles are often given as presents, used at table settings or used to remember loved ones over Christmas and the New Year period.

"If you choose to light candles, keep the immediate area around the candle well clear of combustible items such as curtains, decorations and wrapping paper. Children and pets must **never** be left unattended with candles – and always keep lighters and matches up high, out of the reach and sight of children," MFS Assistant Chief Fire Officer Glenn Benham said.

If people choose to use candles, the MFS recommends the following **home fire safety** tips:

- Use candles only with constant adult supervision
- Keep the immediate area around a candle clear of all items, especially items that can catch fire, such as clothing, books, wrapping paper, tablecloths and decorations
- Do not place lit candles in windows, where blinds or curtains can close over them
- Make sure candles are placed in sturdy holders that will not tip over and place them on a secure piece of heat-resistant furniture. Candle holders must be non-combustible
- Do not use candles in places where they can be knocked over by children or pets
- Extinguish all candles when leaving a room or going to sleep
- Keep candles and all open flames away from flammable liquids.

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 more information about **home fire safety** and **candle safety** visit: www.mfs.sa.gov.au

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