

FIRE SAFETY MESSAGE

In the last four weeks we have seen tragic deaths as a result of house fires in New South Wales. Now we are feeling the pinch of winter upon us, I ask all to take extra care in using appliances and heating devices this winter – both at home and work.

FACT: The NSW Fire Brigades attended 4425 residential fires in NSW during 2004 with 1292, or 29% of them, occurring in the winter months. (Statistics correct as of 09/06/05).

Is your home winter fire safe?

We recommend this simple safety checklist to help keep homes fire safe this winter. Make sure you and everyone in your household follows the following safety advice:

- Most importantly, have an adequate number of suitable smoke alarms installed throughout your home and make sure that you test them regularly.
- Make sure you and all your family know two safe ways out of every room in your home.
- Have a written home escape plan in case of fire and practice it regularly.
- Never ever leave cooking unattended.
If you have a fireplace in your home make sure the chimney is clean.
- If you have a fireplace always place a screen in front of it when in use.
- Check electric blankets for damage or frayed cords before placing on the bed.
- Take care to keep curtains, tablecloths and bedding away from portable heaters.
- Keep wet clothing at least 1 metre from heaters or fireplaces and never leave unattended.
- If you use a clothes dryer make sure you clean the lint filter each and every time you use it.
- Only use one appliance per power point and switch off when not in use.
- Always extinguish candles or any other open flames before going to bed.
- Always handle candles or any other open flame with care.
Store matches or lighters in a secure place not accessible to young children.

Winter Fire Safety Tips

- To test an electric blanket lay it flat on top of the bed, then switch it on for five minutes before putting it on the bed for use to confirm it is okay.
- Use only authorised installers of fixed heating appliances.
- Oil, gas or wood heating units may require a yearly maintenance check.
- Only use fuses of recommended rating and install an electrical safety switch.
- If possible, in the kitchen keep a fire extinguisher and fire blanket placed near the exit.
- Never leave burning candles or any open flame unattended.

Spend some time today/tonight to check your homes/workplace for essential fire safety measures, such as smoke alarms, where the fire extinguisher etc is located, create a 'home escape plan' for your home and practice it with your family, and make sure you are using heating sources and appliances safely.

Common causes of winter fires in homes include cooking left unattended, faulty electrical blankets, lint build-up in clothes dryers and overloading power supplies, such as piggybacking double adaptors. Now it is particularly important to be extremely careful when using heating appliances, open fires, stoves, ovens and dryers. People should ensure appliances and heating sources have been checked for faults and are properly maintained, they are being used correctly and are under constant supervision. Have your appliance in the workplace been tested and tagged? Most importantly, never leave your home while they are still in operation.

Fire Safety not only happens at work – it starts at home!

Reference and Advice: NSW Fire Brigades Community Risk Safety Unit

***For more information & advice contact The Emergency
Management Unit***

<http://www.emergency.unsw.edu.au> or

(02) 9385 2825