

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## Prepare your chimneys and flues for winter

Tuesday, 27 May 2014

With winter just around the corner, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) is urging the public to ensure their chimneys and flues are inspected and cleaned before cold weather sets in.

Over the past two years, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters have responded to more than 150 chimney and flue fires that have caused significant property damage and threatened lives.

MFS Commander of Community Safety and Resilience, Greg Howard said common causes included poorly installed or maintained chimneys and flues.

“The MFS recommends that people have their chimneys and flues inspected and cleaned by a qualified person before cold winter weather sets in and fireplaces are in constant use. It’s important to ensure chimneys and flues haven’t deteriorated or become blocked over the years.”

“Sparks, embers and radiant heat from open fires, combustion heaters and flues can also cause house fires. For that reason, we urge people to always use a fire screen around an open fire and to never place combustibles within two metres of fireplaces, combustion heaters and flues,” MFS Commander Howard said.

Last winter, MFS firefighters battled a house fire caused by a bird’s nest that had been built around a gas flue in a roof space. A postie noticed the blaze while delivering mail in the area.

“While having your chimneys and flues checked by a qualified person, also ask them to check your roof space to ensure that debris such as loose insulation, bird or vermin nests haven’t gathered around a chimney or flue since the previous winter,” MFS Commander Greg Howard said.

Year	Fire Cause	Number of fires
2012	Chimneys & Flues	78 fires
2013	Chimneys & Flues	66 fires
2014	Chimneys & Flues	12 fires (to date)

*\*Chimney and flue fires responded to by MFS and CFS firefighters.*

If you plan to use a combustion heater, gas heater or open fire this winter, the MFS recommends the following safety tips:

- Flues and chimneys should be inspected for damage and cleaned by a qualified person at the beginning of cooler weather
- Always use a fire screen in front of open fires and close combustion heater doors to prevent sparks or embers from coming into contact with carpet, furniture and other combustibles
- Keep any combustibles ideally two metres from a fire place, flue, gas or combustion heater to minimise the threat of a fire starting
- Never leave children or pets unsupervised in a room where an open fire or combustion heater is in use
- Keep matches and lighters well out of reach of children – storage above adult shoulder height and out of sight is recommended
- Never place hot ashes in household bins or council bins – only cold, fully extinguished ashes should be deposited in bins. Have a metal bucket which you use only for ash.

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 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](http://www.mfs.sa.gov.au)