

Home heating

STAYING SAFE IN YOUR HOME



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Heating is essential in winter, but it comes with an increased risk of fire. Make sure you know how to prevent fires starting in your home by being safe when heating your home.

Heating your home safely

Heating is one of the main causes of house fires in winter. It doesn't matter what kind of heating you have, it is a fire risk.

Keep yourself and your family safe by following these tips.

- Turn off heating and put out wood fires before going to bed or leaving home.
- Keep items that can catch fire at least one metre away from all heat sources. This includes:
 - clothes
 - sofas and chairs
 - toys
 - papers and anything else which can burn.
- Children should not be left alone near heaters, so they don't accidentally get severely burnt.
- All heaters should be in good working order to prevent a fire starting.

Make a safer choice

New heaters have the best safety features. Replace your old heaters with new ones that will turn off when tipped over or when it overheats. Newer heaters are also generally more efficient for heating your home.

Gas heating

Gas heaters can start a fire if there is a gas leak. They should be inspected and serviced every two years by a professional.

Carbon monoxide poisoning

Gas heaters that are not operating efficiently can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide, commonly known as the silent killer, can't be seen, tasted or smelt.

Breathing in carbon monoxide can cause loss of consciousness, seizures and even death. This is why it is important to have your gas heaters regularly serviced.





Portable heaters

Portable heaters are only designed to heat small spaces for short periods of time. Follow these tips when using portable heaters to warm up your room:

- Turn portable heaters off if you leave the room or go out.
- Don't put anything on top of or near your heater, including toys, your couch, clothes or anything else which can catch fire. Keep all items at least one metre from the heater.
- Don't let children play near heaters.
- Only use heaters which have an automatic safety switch that turns them off if tipped over or if they overheat.
- Don't use portable heaters that are designed to be filled with a liquid like kerosene.

Open fires and wood heaters

Wood fires are a common way to heat homes across Victoria, but they can be dangerous.

Follow these tips when using open fires and cast iron wood heaters:

- Always put the fire out before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Use a fire screen to help stop logs rolling out of the fire or embers and sparks landing on your floor. A fire screen can protect children from severe burns from touching the fireplace or wood heater.
- Keep wood and other flammable objects, like drying clothes and soft toys, at least one metre away from fire. Clothes airers can be tipped over which can cause clothes to catch fire if they land on the heater or fire.
- Only burn dry, clean wood. Green wood, or treated wood can release toxic gases. Burning green wood also increases the build-up of creosote. Creosote is a black substance that can build up inside the chimney. If enough builds up this substance can catch fire and cause a chimney fire which can spread to your whole house.
- When cleaning your fireplace or wood heater, check that embers are cold before you throw them out, otherwise they could start a fire in your bin.
- Chimneys and flues should be cleaned yearly, to prevent a build-up of creosote. This should be done in autumn, before you light your fire for the first time when the weather starts to cool. Birds can build a nest in your chimney after you stop using it in spring. This can catch fire once you start using your fireplace in autumn.

For more information on home fire safety visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au/homefire