

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Prepare your air conditioners for summer

Tuesday, 23 November 2010

The Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) says that a fire at an aged care facility in Adelaide overnight is a reminder to all South Australians to ensure their air cooling equipment is ready for summer.

At 11.00 pm, eight MFS appliances and 37 firefighters responded to reports of a fire at a residential care facility.

On arrival, firefighters found an evaporative cooler alight on the roof and assisted with the safe evacuation of about 38 residents while extinguishing the blaze.

MFS Fire Cause Investigators determined the fire was probably caused by a malfunction in the evaporative cooler and the quick work of firefighters prevented the fire from spreading.

“This incident serves as a reminder to all householders and businesses to ensure their air cooling equipment is ready for summer, by having it serviced by a qualified tradesperson.

“Last Summer, the MFS and CFS responded to three house fires caused by air cooling equipment in just one weekend. Those fires left a total damage bill of \$600,000,” MFS Fire Cause Investigator, Greg Smithson said.

If electrical cooling equipment is inadequately maintained and used continuously for long periods during heatwave events, there is a danger of the equipment overheating and causing a fire.

Importantly, the MFS **does not discourage** the use of electrical air cooling equipment as it can be a necessary health requirement for the elderly or families with young children.

You can reduce the potential for fire in the following ways:

- Electrical cooling equipment such as air conditioners and evaporative coolers should be installed by a qualified tradesperson in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.
- All electrical cooling equipment, both permanently installed systems and portable equipment, should be regularly serviced by a licensed tradesperson according to the manufacturer’s specifications.
- Arrange to have your equipment serviced so that it is fully functional when the hot weather begins.
- Do not leave your air cooling equipment running unattended while not at home.
- If you have an older air conditioner without a regulating thermostat, consider replacing it with one that has a regulating thermostat.
- Keep portable electrical cooling equipment away from wet areas to avoid the possibility of electric shock.
- Children must be supervised when cooling equipment is in use. Keep an eye on children and pets, particularly when portable equipment is within reach.

The MFS urges householders to combine the above safety tips with reliable, working smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old and to have 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