

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Tragedy highlights cooking fire safety

Thursday, 28 October 2010

A tragic house fire in South Australia's Riverland region has prompted the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) to highlight cooking fire safety.

Early this morning, MFS appliances and firefighters, Paramedics and SAPOL Officers responded to a fire at a home on Riverview Drive at Berri. On arrival, crews found the kitchen and roof space well involved in fire.

Sadly, the fire resulted in the death of a woman who was home at the time the fire started.

MFS Fire Cause Investigators travelled from Adelaide to investigate the blaze with SAPOL Fire Cause Investigators.

Investigators have determined that the fire was probably caused by an oil (fat) fire on a stove. It is believed that the woman may have tried to move the pot from the stove.

MFS Fire Cause Investigator, Phil Kilsby, says the fire has affected the woman's loved ones and community, and is a reminder to all about the dangers of cooking fires.

The MFS urges all householders to follow these tips:

- **Never leave cooking unattended.**
- **Use extra caution when cooking with oils.** Heat cooking oils slowly.
- **Never throw water onto an oil or fat fire.** Use a fire blanket, cooking utensil lid or a Dry Chemical Powder fire extinguisher.
- **Never try to move a pan that has caught on fire.** This may result in spillage, injury and the spreading of fire.
- Lids of pots and pans (when the pot/pan is in use but the lid is not) should be readily available on the bench top. The use of oven mittens and a lid is an effective method of smothering a small pot or pan fire. If the fire does not go out immediately, evacuate your home before calling triple zero for help.
- **Turn pot/pan handles inward** so they cannot be knocked over and are out of the reach of children. (**Note:** Not over another element that is turned on.)
- **If a fire occurs in the oven, turn the oven off and leave the door closed** to smother the fire. If the fire does not go out, evacuate your home before calling triple zero for help.
- Remove all grease and oil from cooking surfaces before you cook.
- Keep combustible materials away from the cooking area.
- Wear clothes with short or tight-fitting sleeves. Loose garments can easily catch fire.

The MFS urges householders to buy an approved **fire blanket and a portable fire extinguisher** to keep them safe in the kitchen. A Dry Chemical Powder fire extinguisher with a minimum rating of 5B(E) is recommended.

Station Officer, Phil Kilsby says, "Even if you have a small fire on the stove and believe you've completely extinguished it, you should still call triple zero for fire response. Firefighters will ensure the fire hasn't spread to the roof space above flues and fans, and will not charge for attendance.

"In addition, familiarise yourself with the fire blanket or extinguisher instructions now, so you know what to do if a fire starts," Mr Kilsby says.

The MFS urges householders to combine the above safety tips with reliable, working 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