

Heater and Fireplace Safety



Heaters and fireplaces can inflict a serious burn to a child in less than a second.

Many house fires and burn injuries are caused by the unsafe use of heaters. Heating safety involves the correct installation and maintenance of the heating device, supervision of children, safe clearance between the heater and flammable materials, the use of correct fuels and adherence to the manufacturer's instructions.

Electric and Gas Heaters

Too often electric and gas heaters are put too close to flammable materials like curtains and clothing or are knocked over onto carpet. This is a common cause of household fires.

Safe Practices

- Choose an electric model that has an automatic safety switch that turns the heater off if tipped over.
- Do not use the electric heater with a damaged cord or plug.
- Do not use an electric heater on table tops unless specified by the manufacturer. Do not place a heater on furniture.
- Unless the electric heater is designed for use outdoors or in bathrooms, do not use in damp, wet areas.
- Have your gas heater installed by a trained qualified licensed gas plumber.

- Ensure your gas heater is run and maintained according to the manufacturer's service schedule.
- If you smell gas, turn off the appliance immediately and contact your gas supplier.
- Do not use outdoor patio heaters indoors. They require adequate ventilation.
- Heaters should be placed on a flat, level surface.
- Make sure the heater is well ventilated and not resting against walls or curtains when in operation.
- Keep heaters well clear from items that might burn. A minimum of 1 metre clearance from clothes, bedding, furniture, curtains and other combustibles is recommended.
- Never leave a heater unattended.
- Always turn the heater off if you are going to sleep or leaving the house.



Some people have found reverse cycle heating/air-conditioning as a safe heating option to use around children.

Radiating heaters are not recommended.



Fireplaces

A fireplace is a beautiful and warm addition to the interior or exterior of a home. However it is important that your fireplace is kept safe to ensure that members of your family are not seriously hurt.

Safe Practices

- Flues and chimneys should be cleaned regularly to prevent a build up of flammable material and ensure the fireplace functions correctly
- Clean your fireplace out after each use.
- Install a screen/guard to prevent children accessing hot surfaces.
- Use a screen to prevent embers from jumping out of the fire and potentially burning your carpet or rugs, or starting a fire.
- For gas fireplaces, regularly check the connections to ensure that there are no gas leaks that can potentially cause a problem.
- For electric fireplaces, ensure that there are no issues with the electrical connections.
- Do not hang decorations or combustible items on the fireplace.



Using Guards

Make sure that the heater or fireplace is not easily accessible by children when it is in use. Protect them by using a barrier, such as a fireplace screen or guard, so that they cannot get close and burn themselves.

Guards should be about 700mm high and placed at least 1 metre clear of hot surfaces to prevent children from putting hands or objects towards the hot surface. Ensure that the guard can be secured to the walls or floor to prevent a child from pushing it onto the heat source.

Also make sure that any fireplace tools are not easily accessible. If children think these are toys they could injure themselves.

Educating Children

Educating children on the importance of fire safety is an important way parents and carers can prevent burn injuries.

Safety rules should include:

- Matches are not toys. Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children.
- The fireplace, including the hearth and mantel, is not a play area. Children shouldn't hang from the mantel or jump off the hearth.
- Inside the fireplace is off limits. Children should be taught not to climb inside or remove any screens or doors in order to get to the fireplace.
- If a fire is lit, children should be taught not to approach closer than 1metre. Supervise children at all times.

For further information:

- *Burn Injury Prevention* information sheet available to download from kidsafensw.org
- Product Safety Australia productsafety.gov.au
- Learn to Stop Burns chw.edu.au

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