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Check heating appliances for a safe winter

Householders are reminded to check the condition of heating appliances before switching them on this winter to help reduce the risk of electrical fires.

Essential Energy's General Manager Safety, HR and Environment, David Nardi, said the incidence of house fires traditionally increased in the cooler months.

"Some appliances such as heaters and electric blankets have been in storage for most of the year and need a thorough inspection and clean before being used," David said.

Essential Energy recommends checking plugs and cords for loose connections, frayed and exposed wiring – which should be repaired before use – and cleaning heaters with a vacuum cleaner or soft, dry cloth to remove any dust.

"If unsure about the condition of an appliance, have it tested by a licensed electrician or appliance repairer. Damaged appliances can be dangerous, and they may also be less efficient to run," David said.

"Ensure heaters are situated at least one metre away from curtains, rugs, bedding, clothing, towels, furniture and other flammable materials before using and turn them off before leaving the room or going to sleep."

Consider purchasing new heaters with an automatic shut-off which activates if knocked over and always supervise children and pets around heaters to prevent accidents.

Only use purpose-built heaters in bathrooms to ensure they are safe for use in wet areas.

"As an additional safeguard, change the batteries in your smoke and fire alarms, and test all units around the house are working properly," David said.

For more information on electrical safety visit: www.essentialenergy.com.au/safety or call Essential Energy on **13 23 91**.

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