



18 December 2009

OVERNIGHT HOUSE FIRE SPARKED BY INCORRECTLY INSTALLED INSULATION

A house fire at St Albans overnight has highlighted concerns about the risk posed by the improper installation of ceiling insulation.

The fire at Atheldene Drive caused over \$100,000 damage with MFB Fire Investigation and Analysis (FIA) Unit officers saying the blaze resulted from incorrectly installed insulation covering down lights sparking a fire.

“Fortunately no one was injured in the fire, but all fires are potentially lethal. This fire highlights the need for the community to ensure the installation of both down lights and insulation has been done correctly by a qualified professional,” said Station Officer Rod East, from the MFB’s FIA Unit.

“Down lights do not necessarily pose a fire threat if owners take some simple steps.”

Down lights when installed incorrectly, e.g.; close against structural timber, or covered over by the insulation or any foreign ceiling debris, DO pose a problem that can create a substantial fire risk.

Down lights, when correctly installed, DO NOT pose a problem. It is the improper installation of ceiling insulation that can make contact with heated down lights that is the concern.

The MFB and EnergySafe Victoria advise the public to:

- Always use a Licensed Electrician and always ask for the Certificate of Electrical compliance.
- Ask the Licensed Electrician to show you the barriers that will be used to keep insulation away from the down lights.
- Never allow the installation of electrical equipment into or against insulation or structural members.
- Regularly inspect down lights and transformers to ensure that they have installed a non-flammable / mechanical barrier around them to prevent insulation or other material covering them catching fire. As a general guide, the minimum clearance requirement should be a hands width all around the light and transformer.
- Where possible, always use the best quality available fittings and guards.
- Ensure that all the down lights and transformers remain clear of insulation or other material, following ANY work has been conducted in the roof space.
- If in doubt, contact your local Electrician who can provide advice on the types of guards available today, or contact Energy Safe Victoria direct on (03) 9203 9700.
- Home Safety Electrical Inspections are available (at a cost) through Energy Safe Victoria log onto www.esv.vic.gov.au for details or to arrange an audit.
- Additional Information is available from Archi Centre on (03) 9819 4577 concerning home safety and down lights.

For further enquiries and photographs contact MFB Communications and Media:

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