media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service

Beware of electronics bought online

Tuesday, 8 December 2020

As Christmas shopping season gets underway, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) is reminding the community of the potential danger of buying electrical items online from overseas that do not comply with Australian electrical safety standards.

MFS Community Engagement Officer Angelo Mastripolito said many people may be buying electronic gifts or Christmas decorations online that do not meet the relevant Australian Standards.

An Ingle Farm family recently lost their home to an accidental fire believed to be caused by faulty LED decorative lights purchased online. A failed adaptor resulted in a $100,000 damage bill.

Of the three identical LED decorative light products the family bought, two were faulty. None carried the Australian Regulatory Compliance Mark, which is a recognised Australian safety approval mark.

Regulatory Compliance Mark

MFS Community Engagement Officer Angelo Mastripolito said the MFS does not recommend buying electrical items online or from overseas that do not meet our safety standards.

"Buying electronics from unknown suppliers online, instead of reputable Australian retailers, increases the risk of receiving non-compliant, imitation or unsafe products that may spark a fire."

"The last thing you want is to risk a fire happening in your home from a Christmas gift. It is a case of 'buyer beware' if you cannot verify a product's compliance with Australian electrical safety standards."

"If a product comes with a battery charger, always ensure spare batteries are also compatible and made to Australian Standards," Community Engagement Officer Mastripolito said.

The MFS provides the following safety tips for online Christmas shoppers:

- When shopping online, buy from a reputable company that sells products that meet Australian Standards.
- To find out if a product meets Australian Standards, look for a Regulatory Compliance Mark and/or the Standards Australia 'five ticks' symbol on the product or packaging.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for the safe and appropriate installation, maintenance and subsequent use of any electrical item.
- When electrical equipment is not in use and does not need a power supply, consider turning it off at the power point.
- Never use water to extinguish an electrical fire. Use a dry powder extinguisher with an 'ABE' or 'BE' rating.
- Combine the above safety tips with the installation of well-maintained, photo-electric smoke alarms in your home that are less than 10 years old.

For further information, please access our MFS Home Fire and Life Safety Fact Sheet on Electrical Hazards and Electronic Devices on the MFS website.