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Gas Safety Around the House

Smoke Alarms saves lives

Victoria has had a number of fatalities in house fires where there are no smoke alarms, or they have not been working. It is important to replace the battery and test it regularly. Smoke alarms have a 10-year lifespan and may need to be replaced. This also includes permanently wired ones. They use a radioactive isotope as the detection system, and this has a limited life. The City of Greater Geelong says domestic smoke alarms can be disposed of in the red rubbish bin, as the level of radioactivity is low and the detector is encased. The CFA now recommends lithium battery-powered models with a 10-year battery life. More information can be found on the CFA web page:

www.cfa.vic.gov.au.

Only working smoke alarms save lives.

CO Poisoning

CO (Carbon monoxide) is a colourless, odourless, tasteless gas that is poisonous. It is produced by the incomplete burning of fuels such as natural gas and LPG. The risk is high for gas appliances that are not vented to the outside, such as gas cooktops and heaters. Risk is also high in enclosed spaces such as caravans, boats and houses. CO detectors can be purchased from hardware stores. They are in hardware stores, in the same location as smoke detectors, and are about the same price.

BBQ LPG Hoses

Last summer in Victoria, there were over 100 dangerous barbecue fires involving LP Gas cylinders. Some of those barbecue fires turned into house fires, resulting in serious burns and the loss and damage of family homes.

Before you light up the BBQ this summer, **check the hoses**. If it's in sunlight, the UV will degrade the rubber hose. If necessary, replace the rubber hoses. This should be done by a suitable qualified person. If the BBQ is exposed to sunlight, cover the rubber hose to protect it from UV. (insulation tape?)

A useful safety measure is to install a 'Gas Safety Shut-off Valve'. It fits between the gas cylinder and the gas regulator and automatically shuts off the gas in the event of a major leak. They can be purchased from hardware stores and BBQ places.

Hints:

- Use in a well-ventilated area. (CO poisoning)
- Test for leaks using soapy water. Reuse a spray bottle.
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- Turn off the gas cylinder when finished.

For more information on gas and electrical safety, see 'Energy Safe Victoria' at www.esv.vic.gov.au.

Gutter Cleaning Hints

Ladder Safety

Using ladders is dangerous. Falls from ladders can cause medical problems. Only use ladders if you know the safety rules. Old people should not use ladders.

Tying the Ladder

For safety reasons, a ladder should be tied at the top. Use a G clamp on the gutter; a plastic-padded one is better. A block of wood inside allows for the rolled top of the gutter. Then tie the ladder to the clamp. This prevents the ladder from sliding sideways along the gutter, which could cause a fall.

Home-made Gutter Cleaning tools.

Tool 1: Bend a rod and weld a bit of sheet metal to the bottom. Use 2mm rods or a MIG welder. This gets under the tiles or roofing iron.



Tool 2: Fold sheet metal into a 'C' shape and screw it to a bit of timber. It is used to remove leaf litter from the gutter. An optional hole and string at the other end are used to hang it in the shed.



Cleaning Solar Panels

Coming soon

Appliance Faults

Toaster Turning Power Off. Give the toaster a good shake to remove bread crumbs. Open any cleaning covers. A build-up of breadcrumbs can cause earth leakage and trip the 'safety switch' (RCD) on the house switchboard. Breadcrumbs can also cause other problems. If you have the skills, pull the toaster apart for better cleaning. Remove the toaster from the power before doing this! Electrical safety!

Garden

Weeding in Stone Mulch Garden Beds

Controlling sour grass (*Oxalis pes-caprae*) in stone mulch garden beds is difficult. It is resistant to Glyphosate weed killers (i.e., zero, etc.) I have used an LPG gas burner to kill it. It requires very little heat to kill it.





After the treatment. The dead plant material rots very quickly.

Using an LPG burner during the Victorian fire danger period is illegal without a 'burn permit'. An electric hot air gun works OK. But it is not as good as the LPG burner. It is solar-powered if you have solar panels. What did not work? Wallpaper remover, not enough heat. Hair dryer, not hot enough. Plastic welding touch works, but it's too small. Like cleaning a floor with a toothbrush.

Computers & Office

Identity Thief.

Do not use your birth date (forward or reversed) as part of your ID for things like eBay, PayPal, or email addresses. Your date of birth is used to confirm your identity. It is not a good idea to use it in a password, as a scammer may try to guess your password. Use your postcode or street number if you require one.

Disposal of Private Documents

I had a shredder, but it broke down. Had to find alternative methods for destroying documents/papers.

1. For low-security documents, cut them diagonally across the page. People cannot read a complete line of text.
2. Put the documents into a bucket of water. Now put them into a compost bin or a worm farm. Decomposing the documents is suitable if the public has no access to the compost bin or a worm farm. The paper documents will become unreadable in a very short time.
3. Burn them in a fire.

Copying text and pictures from the internet.

To copy images from the web, right-click on the image. A drop-down menu appears, and select 'Save image as'. This then saves the image in the 'Downloads folder'. Some web pages prevent you from doing this. They do not want you to steal their pictures. All is not lost as windows. Windows has a 'Print Screen' key. This copies the screen to the clipboard. Now paste it into 'Paint', edit it, and save the image.

To copy text from a web page, copy and paste it into 'Notepad'. Notepad is Microsoft's simple text editor included with Windows. It does not support formatting codes. Now, cut and paste into your word processor.

These techniques are helpful when you want to print a web page that does not print very well or uses excessive paper.

Shortcut keys: **Copy** Ctrl+C, **Paste** Ctrl+V, **Cut** Ctrl+X

Add up a long list of numbers.

If you make a mistake when using a calculator to add a long list of numbers, you have to start over again. Enter them into a spreadsheet and use the SUM function to calculate the total. This allows you to check the numbers, make corrections, and also print them.

