

VBA warns on carbon monoxide poisoning risks following Hobart house incident

The carbon monoxide poisoning of 11 people at a house in Hobart this week has highlighted the risk of using appliances designed for outdoor heating or cooking indoors and in confined spaces.

The Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) conducted gas monitoring at the scene and confirmed carbon monoxide levels were at least four to five times above what is regarded as safe.

The TFS said the elevated readings were caused by a solid fuel barbeque being used inside for cooking, causing carbon monoxide to build up in the room over several hours.

Media reported that, as a result of the incident, 11 people, including nine children, were taken to hospital.

The Victorian Building Authority's (VBA) Executive Director of Operations, Alison Byrne, said the thoughts of all Victorians were with the families affected by the carbon monoxide poisoning incident.

"Sadly, as we see all too frequently, particularly during winter, serious injuries and close calls can and do occur where people use outdoor cooking and heating appliances fuelled by gas, charcoal and other combustion means indoors or in confined spaces," Ms Byrne said.

"The improper use of such appliances can quickly turn into a tragic situation due to carbon monoxide poisoning."

Unlike wood and gas heaters that are flued or ducted to the outside to remove carbon monoxide gas, outdoor cookers and outdoor heaters are not flued or designed for indoor use.

"This incident is a timely reminder for Victoria's plumbing practitioners to also speak to their clients about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning where flued indoor heaters are faulty or poorly maintained," Ms Byrne said.

"Carbon monoxide is known as the 'silent killer' because it is colourless and odourless, so it is important for the community to take it very seriously."

The VBA and Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) encourage regular maintenance and servicing of gas heaters – at least every two years – by a plumber licensed in the appropriate class of gasfitting.

In addition, the VBA, ESV and Master Plumbers jointly conduct webinars for appropriately registered and licensed gasfitters and plumbers to refresh training and highlight changes and issues in testing and servicing gas appliances.

For further information about carbon monoxide, visit the [VBA website](#) or the [ESV website](#).