

Plumber pleads guilty to poor gas heater installation

A Victorian plumber has been fined almost \$5000 by the state plumbing regulator and ordered to undertake further training after a gas heater installation resulted in a [carbon monoxide](#) leak.

Belmont man Thomas McNiven pleaded guilty at a Plumbing Inquiry to breaches including carrying out non-compliant gasfitting work and failing to provide a compliance certificate within five days of completing work.

The inquiry follows a complaint from the homeowners lodged with the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) in January 2019.

VBA inspectors found that Mr McNiven had removed too many bricks when he installed a gas heater at a St Kilda property, resulting in the heater not sealing properly.

The VBA's Director of Compliance and Enforcement, Rosemary Martin, said gas heaters could be deadly if not installed correctly.

"This case highlights the danger of gasfitting when it goes wrong and should serve as a warning for all practitioners to have make sure they are acting safely at all times," she said.

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

Mr McNiven was fined \$4,956.30 and must complete two training courses within the next 12 months, or he will have his plumbing licence cancelled. The VBA will also inspect his next five installations.

At the hearing, Mr McNiven accepted the standard of his work was poor, but he was able to demonstrate to the inquiry panel that he has improved his practice since the breaches occurred.

Carbon monoxide is one of the by-products of natural gas combustion, the process that occurs in a gas heater. It is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that can cause death or serious illness.

Carbon monoxide poisoning can occur in any home or building with gas heating appliances. This includes newer models. Sadly, in the past decade, nine Victorians have died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

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 more information, including to [find an appropriately licensed plumber](#), visit the [VBA website](#).