



Media Release

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Victorians urged to have open flued gas space heaters serviced every two years

Energy Safe Victoria (ESV), the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) and the Department of Health are urging Victorians to be aware of the potentially fatal threat of carbon monoxide poisoning from unserviced open flued gas space heaters.

ESV surveyed 1,400 Victorians as part of its Be Sure campaign this year, with only 63 per cent aware that they need to have their heaters serviced at least once every two years by a licensed gasfitter with the specialised class to service Type A gas appliances.

Open flued gas space heaters are designed to interact with air in the home, drawing air from the room for combustion. Unserved and faulty units can result in carbon monoxide leakage created by negative pressure, which occurs when operating bathroom exhaust fans or kitchen rangehoods in houses with little-to-no ventilation.

The Victorian Department of Health has also issued a warning, reminding the community that carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms were often similar to the flu.

Be Sure was launched in 2019 in the wake of the death of Greensborough woman Sonia Sofianopoulos who was found dead in her home from carbon monoxide poisoning from an open flued gas space heater in 2017.

This year, new Australian Standards endorsed by the Victorian Government, were introduced for newly manufactured open flued gas space heaters, ensuring they shut down within 15 minutes when carbon monoxide spillage is detected. The new Standards also apply to energy-efficient Type 2 decorative effect appliances.

The Government is also currently assessing submissions to a Regulatory Impact Statement focused on the implementation of mandated servicing standards for open flued gas space heaters. If these Standards are approved, changes will be implemented from July 1 this year.

The Victorian Building Authority's State Building Surveyor Andrew Cialini said practitioners should promote safety awareness with consumers. Victorians can visit vba.vic.gov.au/check to make sure their gasfitter is licensed.

For more information visit esv.vic.gov.au/campaigns/carbon-monoxide.

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ESV Commissioner and Chairperson Marnie Williams

“We are urging Victorians to ensure their families are protected this winter with tens of thousands of open flued gas heaters still being used across the state,” Ms Williams said.

“We want people to be warm in their homes but those with open flued gas heaters need to ensure their units are serviced by Type A, licensed plumbers at least every two years.”

Victoria’s Deputy Chief Health Officer Dr Angie Bone

“Carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms can be similar to those suffered by those with the flu. These include headaches, tiredness, dizziness and nausea.

“And while not all flu-like symptoms are the result of carbon monoxide poisoning, the community is urged to be aware this risk and seek medical advice if concerned, particularly if symptoms improve when outside.”

Victorian Building Authority State Building Surveyor Andrew Cialini

“As the seasons change, the VBA reminds Victorians that gas heaters could be deadly if not installed and serviced correctly.”

“Carbon monoxide is known as the ‘silent killer’ because it is colourless and odourless, so it is important for the community to understand the risk, and plumbers installing or servicing gas heaters to take the opportunity to educate consumers when the opportunity presents.”