

Pre-winter checklist to keep you safe, warm and dry

Autumn is the season to prepare the house for the colder and wetter weather of winter in Victoria.

To assist households to keep safe, warm and dry during winter, the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) has compiled a checklist:

- **Check your smoke alarms and change batteries:** The end of daylight savings on Sunday 7 April was a trigger to check that your smoke alarms are working properly. It is recommended that you change your smoke alarm battery every 12 months. It's not too late to check.
- **Have your gas heater serviced:** The VBA and Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) recommend that gas heaters are serviced at least once every two years by a gasfitter registered or licensed in Type A appliance servicing work. As part of servicing your gas appliance, the gasfitter will test for carbon monoxide (CO) spillage and negative pressure, two key risks for CO poisoning.
 - If the gasfitter identifies CO spillage, it must be rectified immediately as CO exposure can put lives at risk. This may require the appliance to be repaired or disconnected.
 - If the gasfitter identifies negative pressure, it needs to be rectified. This may require the gasfitter to install additional ventilation.

The gasfitter carrying out the servicing work must provide you with a compliance certificate if the total value of the work is \$750 or more.

Using an unqualified or unregistered person for this work is unlawful and can put your life at risk.

- **Check your gutters and downpipes:** To prevent water damage to your property, you should clean your gutters and downpipes regularly to clear leaves and other debris. This is particularly important in autumn. Properly maintained gutters and downpipes are vital in moving rainwater from the roof to the stormwater drains or tanks.

If gutters or downpipes are corroded or damaged, they require repair or replacement. This work must be carried out by a plumber who is registered or licensed in roofing (stormwater) work. If the total cost of the work is \$750 or more, the plumber must provide a compliance certificate.

- **Check the condition of decks and balconies:** Check that rainwater does not pond on deck or balcony surfaces or flow back towards the property or pond at the base of posts or pillars supporting balconies and decks. Other signs of deterioration include cracked concrete or signs of leaning; cracked or weak mortar; or dislodged brickwork/masonry. Termites, wet rot, environmental conditions and loading can all affect the structural integrity of balconies, decks or balustrades.

Always use an appropriately registered building practitioner (building surveyor, building inspector, builder or structural engineer) to carry out maintenance checks and make repairs to balconies, decks and balustrades.

Remember: Always ask to see a plumber or builder's photo ID card. It lists the classes of work they are licensed and/or registered to do. In addition, you can check a plumber or builder's registration by going to the 'Find a Practitioner' tab on the VBA website (www.vba.vic.gov.au).

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