



**Jillian Skinner MP**

Minister for Health  
Minister for Medical Research

**Stuart Ayres MP**

Minister for Police and  
Emergency Services

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **DON'T LEAVE WINTER FIRE SAFETY TO CHANCE**

The NSW Government today urged home owners to take simple precautions to protect life and property during the peak winter house fire season.

Health Minister Jillian Skinner joined Fire & Rescue NSW Commissioner Greg Mullins and NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons at Crows Nest Fire Station today to launch the annual fire safety awareness campaign.

"Winter is the worst time of the year for home fires, with more than 60% occurring in the cooler months between May and September," Mrs Skinner said.

"Fire & Rescue NSW responded to 1,910 home fires between May and September in 2013. Sadly, this includes fires where people were killed or seriously injured.

"These home fires resulted in 11 fire deaths and 230 injuries. The tragic part is most of these could have been prevented with a few simple steps and precautions."

Police and Emergency Services Minister Stuart Ayres said: "It can take just three minutes for a fire to take hold but only seconds to prevent a fire.

"The personal cost to individuals and families is high but preventable fires also impact on our emergency services, hospital staff and others in the community who respond to the blaze and deal with its aftermath.

"The problem is complacency. People assume it will never happen to them. I assure you, it can," Mr Ayres said.

Commissioner Mullins warned householders they could pay a hefty price for complacency, with a fire in the home costing an average \$46,000.

"On average, firefighters attend 102 home fires a week during winter alone. Nearly half of these fires (47 per cent) start in the kitchen," he said.

"Our firefighters see the devastating personal cost these fires can have on residents - not only physically and emotionally but there are also considerable financial repercussions.

"New data from our principal partner, GIO, reveals the average insurance claim after a fire has occurred in a NSW home is nearly \$46,000 (based on the cost of claims in NSW for May to September 2013).

"This equates to more than \$4.6 million a week during winter for fires in the home - a massive cost to the NSW community.

"Today, most FRNSW fire stations across NSW have opened their doors so visitors can learn more about winter home fire safety from the experts - firefighters.

"Don't leave your fire safety to chance this winter. Have a working smoke alarm and a practised home escape plan and do our free online fire safety checklist (at [www.homefiresafetyaudit.com.au](http://www.homefiresafetyaudit.com.au)) to identify risks in your home," Commissioner Mullins said.

NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said that home fires don't just happen in cities and large towns - rural householders must also be vigilant.

"Both FRNSW and the NSW RFS urge you not to be complacent this winter. Assess the risks at your home and take the precautions needed to prevent a fire," he said.

You can reduce the risk of fire in your home by:

- turning off heaters before going to sleep.
- keeping clothing and other flammable materials at least one metre from heaters and open fires.
- cleaning lint filters on the clothes dryer before use each time.
- turning off electric blankets before going to sleep.
- not overloading power points.
- not leaving cooking or other open-flame materials such as cigarettes and candles unattended.

If a fire does break out, don't fight the fire - get out, stay out and call 000 (Triple Zero).