



# Trading Standards *Information*

## Electric Blankets

Old and damaged blankets cause more than 5,000 fires a year. Research has shown that electric blankets ten years old (or older) still in use in homes in Britain are responsible for 99% of fires caused by electric blankets. Each year approximately 20 people are killed and many more injured in such fires.

### What are the main causes of electric blanket fires?

Some blankets become faulty due to having been used other than in accordance with the manufacturers instructions, others, due to their age or from damage caused by incorrect folding and storage.

### Who is most at risk?

Older people aged 65 years or more are at greatest risk, with six times the national average of fatal injuries and twice the national average of non-fatal injuries.

### Key safety messages: the danger signs

Have your blanket checked or replaced if it shows any of the following danger signs:

- The fabric is worn or frayed.
- There are scorch marks anywhere.
- The tie-tapes (where originally fitted) are damaged or missing. The flex is worn or damaged.
- Any connections at the plug or controls are loose.
- The heating wires have been damaged or displaced. To check, hold the blanket up to the light -the wires should be evenly spaced and not touch each other anywhere.
- If it is 10 or more years old.
- Or if you are in any doubt whatsoever!

## Good practice guidelines

### Choosing your blanket

- It is best to buy new. Second-hand blankets may not be safe.
- The electric blanket or its packaging must be marked with a CE mark. (This is required under Electrical Equipment Safety Regs. 1994).
- Make sure your blanket has an overheating protection system -this cuts the power off if the blanket starts overheating. All new blankets which conform to UK standards now have this feature.

*Please turn over...*

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## **Using your blanket**

- Always read the manufacturer's instructions carefully -and follow them.
- Make sure that the switch/heat control hangs freely, and that the electric flex is not twisted across the blanket or tucked under the mattress or covers.
- Switch your underblanket off before you get into bed, unless it is of the type that can be used at night.
- Make sure your underblanket is kept flat.
- Tie the underblanket to the bed or mattress. This stops it slipping and creasing. Check that the head of the blanket is not at the foot of the bed.
- Never use an underblanket as an overblanket, or an overblanket as an underblanket.
- Never plug an electric blanket into a light fitting -it may be switched on unintentionally.
- Do not fit the blanket to an adaptor or multi-socket block with another appliance plugged in.
- Never use the blanket if it is wet, soiled, creased or rucked-up. Never switch it on to dry it out.
- Never use a blanket with scorch marks or exposed elements.
- Do not use a hot water bottle and an electric blanket together.

## **Storing your blanket**

- An underblanket can be left tied to the bed all year round if you wish.
- To store a blanket for the summer, roll it or fold it with as few creases as possible, and keep it in a dry place.
- Store separately from other bedding, if possible, or keep on top to avoid bedding pressing down on the blanket.
- Or store it by putting it on a spare bed -but make sure it stays dry and flat.

## **Routine checks**

- Have your blanket checked by an expert once every two years, or as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Check frequently for the danger signs
- Return the blanket to the manufacturer if there are signs of wear or damage.
- If the blanket has a PVC overheat protection system, as do some older blankets, check that the PVC material has not deteriorated over time.

Old and damaged blankets cause more than 5,000 fires a year. If your blanket is more than 10 years old, or if it shows signs of wear and tear, the best advice is to get a new one.

**All our information leaflets are available in a range of formats, including tape, large print or Braille. They can also be translated into any main language spoken in Nottinghamshire. If this would be useful to you please contact us on 0115 9773389.**