

Monday 21st May 2007

HOT WATER BOTTLES BANNED

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Jennifer Rankine, has banned the sale of all hot water bottles in South Australia that do not meet safety standards.

Findings of a Coronial Inquest earlier this year revealed that the use of a hot water bottle by carers was a contributor to the death in 2004 of an elderly woman in a nursing home.

A subsequent investigation by the Office of Consumer Affairs found many hot water bottles on sale at the time failed a variety of tests.

While some manufacturers claimed to comply with British industry standards, the investigation found that very few did.

“There have been a number of unpleasant incidents in South Australia involving hot water bottles and it is vital to ensure that people who choose to use them do so both safely and confidently.

We’re talking about manufacturers conforming with minimum safety requirements to produce reliable hot water bottles that don’t pose any undue safety risks, which is essential as we head into the winter months.

This banning order means that only bottles which meet standard requirements can be sold and will go some way in protecting people until a National Safety Standard, which is currently being developed, is made available,” Ms Rankine said.

It outlines marking and labelling requirements, as well as performance criteria, such as adequate rubber thickness, minimum opening width and appropriate sized stoppers.

“This is a widely recognised standard and one which all hot water bottle manufacturers should be adopting,” Ms Rankine said.

Consumer Affairs has also begun an awareness campaign with a particular focus on the elderly community and those in residential facilities as well as others who frequently use hot water bottles for comfort or to assist in alleviating injuries.

The office has already written to nursing homes warning them of the dangers of using hot water bottles incorrectly. Consumer Affairs officers will also be urging retailers to remind and provide people with information about how to use bottles safely.

Key safety recommendations include -

- 1. Never fill a hot water bottle with boiling water. Allow the water to cool a little first.**
- 2. Carefully squeeze the bottle to expel excess air before placing the stopper on the bottle.**
- 3. Only buy hot water bottles that state they comply with the British standard.**
- 4. Remember that hot water bottles wear out. If you are using an older hot water bottle make sure it is still safe. If in doubt throw it out.**

“The awareness campaign will also involve an information stand at the Southgate Plaza Shopping Centre on 25 May 2007, where officers will be available to brief customers on product safety issues, particularly hot water bottles,” Ms Rankine said.

Consumer Affairs regularly monitors products available for sale across the State. A list of banned and dangerous goods can be found at www.ocba.sa.gov.au.

For more information about the safety of hot water bottles, telephone OCBA’s product safety section on 8152 0732 or 131 882 for country callers.