



Australian Government  
Department of Health and Ageing

## Industry feedback alert

Basic home fire safety

### Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance

1 February 2013

---

<b>Who is this alert for?</b>	All Australian Government subsidised providers of home care services.
-------------------------------	---

---

<b>What is an industry feedback alert?</b>	Industry alerts outline an issue, trend or risk we have identified through an analysis of our data and other sources. They provide suggestions of areas that you may wish to review within your service. <b><u>Alerts are not advice or directions.</u></b>
--	---

---

<b>Issue</b>	We are alerting service providers in all jurisdictions to findings made by the Victorian Coroner and Deputy State Coroner. The findings relate to two separate investigations into fatalities caused by fire in care recipients' homes.
--------------	---

---

<b>Observations</b>	<p>The combined recommendations from both Victorian coronial reports are that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• during initial needs assessment, you advise care recipients that it is mandatory for all homes in Victoria to have a working smoke alarm</li><li>• where care is to be provided and there is no smoke alarm, the installation of a smoke alarm is organised in line with service provision. In homes where smoke alarms are installed, these are checked by you to ensure they are in working order</li><li>• you promote regular testing and maintenance of smoke alarms to the care recipient and their family/friends, or provide assistance to care recipients to test and maintain smoke alarms</li><li>• in homes where the care recipient smokes, you promote the use of high-sided ashtrays or sealed containers to allow for properly discarded smoking materials</li><li>• fire safety training materials be included in induction and skills maintenance training for aged care workers in Victoria and basic home fire safety be incorporated into policy and practice guidelines for assessment of older people for "in home" services</li><li>• where the care recipient is considered at a greater risk due to health or lifestyle factors, additional smoke alarms should be installed.</li></ul> <p>The reports also highlight that in Victoria there has been an increase in the number of preventable fire fatalities involving older people and people with disability who receive "in home" care. As demand for these services is predicted to grow, there is a need to identify common risk features and to deliver an improved safety outcome for those most at risk.</p> <p>Current state and territory legislation dictates that smoke alarms are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• mandatory for all homes in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia</li><li>• mandatory for all new homes and homes undergoing renovations in Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia</li></ul>
---------------------	--

---

---

**Suggestions for  
your consideration**

We consider the Victorian coronial findings pertinent to all jurisdictions. While the findings are recommendations and not legislated requirements, we suggest that you:

- make your key personnel aware of the information in this alert
- include fire safety training materials in training for all personnel
- take appropriate action to promote fire safety in the home, such as
  - ensuring your assessment process includes consideration of fire-related risks to the care recipient's safety
  - advising your care recipients of smoke alarm legislation relevant to your state or territory
  - promoting regular testing and maintenance of smoke alarms to care recipients and their family/friends or providing assistance to care recipients to test and maintain smoke alarms
  - promoting the use of high-sided ashtrays or sealed containers to care recipients who smoke to allow for properly discarded smoking materials.

These recommendations are consistent with the *Community Care Common Standards*:

- *Expected Outcome 1.6: Risk Management*, which requires service providers to be actively working to identify and address potential risk to ensure the safety of service users, staff and the organisation.
- *Expected Outcome 1.7: Human Resource Management* which requires service providers to manage human resources to ensure that adequate numbers of appropriately skilled and trained staff/volunteers are available for the safe delivery of care and services to the service users.
- *Expected Outcome 1.8: Physical Resources* which require service providers to manage physical resources to ensure the safe delivery of care and services to service users and organisation personnel.

---

**For more information**

The Victorian Coroner's Court publishes findings and recommendations on its website at [coronerscourt.vic.gov.au](http://coronerscourt.vic.gov.au) - select 'Case Findings' and search for Case IDs 215808 and 316111

---

Quality & Monitoring Branch  
Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance  
Email: [enquiries@health.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@health.gov.au)  
Web: [health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au)