



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

Protecting Our Community

COMMUNITY INFORMATION BULLETIN NO. 19

ELECTRIC BLANKET SAFETY

The winter months can be an extremely cold time of the year particularly for older persons. To help keep you safe and warm in your home, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) has produced this guidance on electric blanket safety.

One of the most common faults is the age of the electric blanket. The Electrical Safety Council recommends that if your blanket is over 10 years old then you should consider disposing of it safely and buying a new one. Take your old blanket to a recycling facility that accepts electric and electronic devices.

When purchasing a new electric blanket, ensure you buy from a reputable supplier and always look out for third party certification marks on the packaging and on the blanket (see examples below). This will mean the blanket has been independently tested and meets the latest UK and European Safety Standards. Never buy a second hand electric blanket.

Examples of third party certification marks:



It is important before using your electric blanket that you read and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Only use the electric blanket as the manufacturer intended, ie, over-blankets must only be positioned above the occupant and under-blankets below the occupant. Keep the instructions in a safe place for future reference. Even if the electric blanket is brand new, it should be checked for any visible signs of damage before use.

Do not keep the electric blanket switched on overnight unless it has a thermostatic control and is designed to be left on over this period. Never use the blanket if it is wet or damp and never switch it on to dry it out.

Examine your electric blanket regularly for signs of wear or damage, looking out for the following danger signs:

- Scorch marks or discolouration areas on the fabric;
- Worn or frayed fabric, or wires visible through the fabric;
- Damage to the power cable between the plug and the blankets controller or between the control and the blanket;
- The control makes a buzzing sound when switched on or gives off a scorching smell; and/or
- Damage or overheating where the electrical cable plugs into the blanket.

If you are in any doubt about your electric blanket then it is preferable to replace it with a brand new one.

It is best practice to store electric blankets flat. When the blanket is not in use, you can leave it on the bed all year round or place it on a spare bed for storage. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for storage:

- Loosely fold or roll it in a towel or plastic bag and store in a cool dry place;
- Always allow the blanket to cool down before storing; and
- Do not place any heavy objects on top of the blanket during storage.

It is recommended to have electric blankets tested annually, particularly if they are in constant use, or at least every three years. Contact the Home Safety Officer at your local council for further advice.

For further information phone NIFRS HQ 028 9266 4221 or visit www.nifrs.org



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