

CEILING INSULATION AND FIRE RISK

This document provides information on the potential fire risks relating to ceiling insulation.

Ceiling insulation has been successfully installed by appropriately qualified contractors in Queensland homes for several decades. No matter the style or type of ceiling insulation, if it is installed correctly, it is most likely to be fire safe.

It is worth noting that the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) has not seen a fire start as a result of ceiling insulation. Something else usually starts the fire.

QFES responds to a number of ceiling fires every year. Some homes have insulation installed. The major cause of fires in ceiling insulation is not the insulation itself, but the way it was installed or the way an electrical fitting has been installed into a ceiling with pre-existing insulation.

Any form of insulation should not be placed over electrical equipment and where possible cabling within the roof space.

Firefighters have attended incidents where residents have smelled smoke, sometimes over several days, and have located smouldering material in ceilings because it had been placed over light fittings and other electrical installations.

The most common causes of roof fires

- » Insulation placed on top of, or too close to halogen down-lights.
- » Insulation fitted over the top of bathroom heater exhaust fans.
- » Insulation fitted too close to a heat source, such as chimney flues.
- » Home renovations where wind enters the roof cavity and dislodges protective light covers or loose fill insulation, causing contact with heat generating electrical fittings.
- » Incandescent light fittings being replaced by halogen down lights, and not having the required separation from the insulation.
- » Electrical wiring in the roof space being accidentally stretched by persons moving around in the roof space. This can cause poor electrical connections, which can lead to a “hot joint”.

Did you know...

Halogen down-lights operate at very high temperatures, and can reach up to 370°C. If they are not separated or insulated from other combustible materials, they can cause fires.

If you have concerns

If you are concerned about your ceiling and you have had insulation recently installed, or other electrical fittings such as down-lights recently fitted, you should:

- » Seek advice from the Electrical Safety Office if replacing or modifying your ceiling light assemblies. Phone 1300 362 128.
- » Have an inspection performed by a qualified person, such as an electrician. QFES do not recommend home owners undertake their own inspections.
- » Visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/electricalsafety for information on electrical safety within your home, and help finding a licenced electrician.
- » Maintain the required clearance around down-lights, bathroom heater exhaust fans and other heat generating items in ceilings.
- » Check your smoke alarms are in good working order. QFES recommends that every home has working photoelectric smoke alarms fitted.
- » Dial Triple Zero (000) in an emergency.

