



CEILING INSULATION & FIRE RISK

The purpose of this document is to provide information relating to ceiling insulation and potential fire risks.

Ceiling Insulation

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

It is worth noting that the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) have not seen ceiling insulation material start a fire. Something else usually starts it.

QFES responds to a number of ceiling fires every year. Some have insulation fitted. The major cause of these ceiling insulation fires 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 or cabling within the roof space.

Firefighters have attended incidents where the residents have smelt 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, then this is what you should do:

- Seek advice from the Electrical Safety Office if replacing or modifying your ceiling light assemblies. Phone 1300 650 662.
- The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services do not recommend home owners undertake their own inspections. Call a suitably qualified person such as an electrician.
- Maintain the required clearance around down-lights, bathroom heater/exhaust fans and other heat generating items in ceilings.
- If you have concerns about insulation fitted under the Federal Government scheme, please call the "Safety Hotline" on 131 792.
- Maintain working smoke alarms. QFES recommend that every home has working photoelectric smoke alarms fitted.
- Dial Triple Zero (000) in an emergency.