

Office of Gas Safety Alert:

Open flued instantaneous gas water heater (IGWH) Installations within toilets and bathrooms.

Briefing notes for gas sellers and suppliers

1. A fatality in March 2003 has led to a decision by OGS that all remaining open-flued instantaneous gas water heaters in toilets and bathrooms should be removed from service as soon as possible. The Office of Housing has removed several hundred from houses under their management. OGS estimate there are several thousands in privately owned houses of the Housing Commission design.
2. OGS is notifying all known addresses and providing an **Important Safety Warning** where these installations may be in use. Direct mailing will commence week ending 18 June 2004. In this notification OGS urges the owner/occupant to have the IGWH replaced, and to be aware of carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms.
3. OGS has arranged with appliance suppliers for a discount/cash back offer, to assist with the financial burden. OGS is also offering \$250 financial assistance for financial hardship (requires health card or pension card).
4. OGS has previously warned all gasfitters not to install a new or replacement open-flued instantaneous water heater in a bedroom, bathroom, toilet or sleeping area (the Gas & Fuel prohibited these installations in 1985). OGS prohibited a 'like-for-like' replacement practice in January 2002.
5. Original and remaining installations (not balanced flue type) often do not have the required ventilation and do not comply. A gasfitter working on one of these installations is at risk of leaving a non-complying and unacceptable installation in an operating condition. OGS recognised this risk, and has issued an **Important Alert for Gasfitters** containing guidance upon how to deal with this situation.
6. A gas company selling or supplying gas for use in an installation known to be unsafe or non-complying is in jeopardy of a breach of S34 of the GSA. OGS cannot provide any relief from this exposure (OGS cannot redefine the status of the installation). OGS will however, notify the gas company of a specific address following failure of all reasonable efforts (by the gasfitter and OGS) to persuade the occupier to have the appliance removed from the toilet or bathroom, and where OGS believed that it is necessary for gas supply to be withdrawn.
7. Where a gas company is aware of an unsafe or non-complying installation by reasons other than OGS notification, and believes that immediate withdrawing of supply is not appropriate, the gas company should notify OGS and seek a direction on how to proceed. OGS would then assess the particular situation, and be responsible for giving an instruction to withdraw supply where necessary.
8. Where the gas company can readily determine that supply should be withdrawn without the need for reference to OGS, OGS expects the gas company to act on its own behalf as required by the Act and the Safety Case.
9. The progress of this alert can be followed on OGS web-site: www.ogs.vic.gov.au. The web-site will go live with this alert Tuesday 15 June, immediately before posting commences.

If you require more information on this matter contact Colin Bickell on 9341 3806.

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