Beware of dodgy electrical Christmas lights and gifts

With Christmas a couple of weeks away, Energy Safe Victoria is warning shoppers to beware of the dangers posed by cheap and dodgy lights, decorations and electrical goods.

The warning follows the death earlier this year of a woman who was electrocuted while using a cheap USB charger plugged into a phone. Despite the efforts of Australia’s safety regulators, dodgy electrical goods that don’t meet Australian standards can still be bought online or sold to unsuspecting shoppers at markets.

As more and more shoppers embrace online shopping, there is a risk of snapping up bargain electrical goods – especially from overseas sellers – that are unsafe for use in Australia and may cause fires, electric shock or electrocution. Unsafe Christmas lights and decorations are another potential danger of the festive season.

“Don’t assume that electrical goods are automatically safe for use in Australia, especially if they are cheap or purchased online. Always check to make sure they meet Australian safety standards or you could be putting yourself and your family and friends in danger,” said Paul Fearon, Victoria’s Director of Energy Safety.

“Always ensure any new or second-hand electrical product has insulated Australian mains pins and the regulatory compliance mark or unique approval number displayed on the appliance.

“If you are shopping online, ESV recommends only buying electrical items through reputable websites or platforms where you can see evidence of the product’s compliance with safety regulations. It’s also important to have the full contact details of the seller and preferably a local representative, because this means there is more chance that any queries or problems can be investigated. Your requests for refund can also be probed,” said Mr Fearon.

“If it seems too cheap or too good to be true then it probably is – you could get a nasty shock or worse if you risk buying and using dodgy electrical products or Christmas decorations,” said Mr Fearon.

More information can be found at www.esv.vic.gov.au and consumers can also search the database of electrical products that are approved for use in Australia at www.erac.gov.au

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