

MEDIA RELEASE

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Never use damaged electrical extension cords warns safety regulator

Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) is urging Victorians to throw out old and damaged electrical extension cords following an incident at Numurkah on Sunday in which two children received a serious electric shock and burns.

The two children were in a portable swimming pool with a pump that was connected to the electricity with a damaged extension cord that had exposed wires near the socket. When the pump started spraying water, a boy, 9, tried to pull the plug from the extension cord and received what could have been a fatal electric shock. An eight-year-old girl was injured when she went to help.

The house did not have a residual current device (RCD) or safety switch installed.

ESV's Director of Energy Safety, Paul Fearon, said old and damaged extension leads should never be used, especially in the vicinity of water.

"This lead could have been at least 50 years old and had exposed wires near the socket," he said. "The rubber sheathing had been damaged and repaired with tape, and the plug earth pin had been modified and was non-compliant. This was a disaster waiting to happen.

"Old, damaged extension cords should be thrown out and never used," he said.

All electrical products sold in Australia since 2006 must have insulated pins, and ESV recommends replacing any extension leads that are older than this. All household appliances should also be regularly inspected to ensure they are safe to use.

Mr Fearon said ESV recommends that all houses have RCDs installed as this provides an additional level of protection and can turn off the power in a fraction of a second.

"A safety switch would have cut off the power before the child received a life-threatening electric shock," he said. "RCDs have been mandatory in new homes since the early 1990s but older homes won't have them unless the wiring has been upgraded. This is a priceless investment as safety switches save lives."

Mr Fearon said anyone with portable pools should always ensure the pumps are plugged into RCD-protected powerpoints or utilise a portable RCD, which can be purchased from electrical retailers. All electrical cords should always be off the ground and well away from water.

For further information:

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