**PRESS RELEASE**

Preventative measures towards protecting your family against fire

***08 June, 2016:*** *For many people the thought of a fire occurring rarely crosses their minds, even though the chances of it happening are as likely as any, with devastating effects. Statistics state that an estimated 890 South African lives could be saved each year if all homes had working smoke alarms.*

ASP Fire CEO **Michael van Niekerk** indicates that electrical sources are known to be the leading causes of home fires. Fires caused by heating sources such as heaters, irons and stoves or ovens are also a main contributor of fires in the home. Therefore the first aspect of preventing fire is a common sense approach, which includes operating electrical equipment and extension cords safely and minimising risk such as not leaving cooking oil on a hot stove.

“The most lethal aspect of a fire is smoke, as it moves away from the seat of the fire and it only takes a few breaths in a smoke filled room to kill a human being. Unfortunately people tend to only focus on security rather than on also preventing fires in South African homes,” he explains.

Electrical multi plug extensions are known to cause fires when they are overloaded, as a higher current is drawn through the adaptor cord that what it is designed to carry. This may result in the overloaded wiring overheating and causing the plastic insulation to catch fire. Plugging in many different appliances, such as a kettle, heater and charger to the same adaptor, will exceed the maximum current rating stated for the extension lead.

There are numerous actions that home and business owners can take to prevent fires. Testing the earth leakage on the distribution board at least once a month by pressing the ‘TEST’ button is a simple example of a preventative measure than can be exercised.

“The earth leakage is designed to trip the electrical supply and de-energise the circuit when there is a short circuit. A faulty earth leakage will not trip when there is a short, resulting in the electrical cables overheating like a toaster, causing the plastic insulation to burn and resulting in a preventable fire,” adds van Niekerk.

Van Niekerk recommends that every DB in the home should include an earth leakage and suitably rated circuit breakers, which protect electrical circuits from damage should there be an overload. Most home owners believe that the circuit breaker will indicate an overloaded circuit, but they fail to assess the electrical load on a single plug point and whether they are overloading the capacity of the wiring to that plug.

Another vital aspect is to ensure that every home has a fire extinguisher and that every family member knows how to use it.

Fire extinguishers are available at retailers in different sizes, including; 9 kg, 4.5 kg, 2 kg and 1 kg cylinders. The bigger the extinguisher, the better suited it is to putting out a fire of any size. A 3 litre water mist extinguisher equates to a 4.5 kg DCP extinguisher and a 6 litre water mist extinguisher equates to a 9 kg DCP extinguisher. The difference is that the water mist extinguishers are far more effective in putting out fires

A water mist fire extinguisher can put out a fire and cool the ignition points and the surfaces around the affected area. All fires can be separated into different categories, depending on the type of fuel that is burning, for example, plastic, metal or wood.

A water mist fire extinguisher is effective on various types of fires, and is not harmful to humans and the environment, unlike CO2 extinguishers or dry chemical powder (DCP) fire extinguishers, which limit vision in a confined space or room, and have negative health and environmental effects on people, pets and on the surrounding area.

According to van Niekerk, the water mist extinguisher works by cooling the fire down, turning heat into cool steam. It disperses high-energy microscopic water mist particles through its nozzle to suppress fires and is safe enough to be used on any area. “It creates a protective shield that helps you get past a hot environment so that you can escape and get your family out, which is more valuable than the property itself.”

Fire extinguishers require servicing at least once a year, through a registered fire servicing company. The water mist extinguisher, which is more costly, has proven to be more effective and requires a cheaper annual service when compared to a DCP extinguisher. “The servicing of the water mist extinguisher is cheaper because it only uses water, unlike a DCP extinguisher, where the powder compacts and hardens and needs to be removed and inspected every year.”

“There is an acronym called PASS, which stand for ‘Pull’ the fire pin, then ‘Aim’ at the bottom of the fire to extinguish the burning product and ‘Squeeze’ the extinguisher and ‘Sweep’ to cover all sides. Each of the family member should know and practise it,” he continues.

Van Niekerk concludes by saying that while it’s important to invest in a security system, investing in a fire detector to protect your family and possessions is just as, if not more imperative. In order to get sufficient warning about a fire to allow your family to safely evacuate the home, he suggests linking smoke detectors to the burglar alarm.

“It is especially necessary when you are asleep and will prevent you from being overcome by smoke and toxic gasses. One should also have a plan to get out of the house and have the extinguisher ready to use. You need to make sure that you protect your family particularly when you have a tricky escape environment, such as only one escape route down stairs and where you can only rely on yourself in the seconds you have to survive a fire.”

***Ends***

**Notes to the Editor**
To download hi-res images for this release, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click the ASP Fire link to view the company’s press office.

**About ASP Fire**
ASP Fire operates across the entire African continent from its Gauteng base, providing professional, accredited fire risk management and support to its clients. ASP Fire designs, installs and maintains a full range of fire detection and suppression equipment suited to clients’ needs. ASP Fire provides a holistic, proactive and preventative fire solution based on integrated fire risk assessment, training and consulting, with the installation and maintenance of fire detection and suppression systems that meet SABS, NFPA, FPASA, FDIA and SAQCC standards.

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