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## Beware of hidden home fire risks

RACQ has warned mice plagues in parts of regional Queensland could pose an increased risk of home fire this year if residents were not vigilant in checking heating equipment.

New research by the insurer found just 42 percent of Queenslanders checked their electric heater for wear and tear each winter before using the appliance.

RACQ spokesperson Kirsty Clinton said it had received almost 1,000 claims for fire damage in the last three years.

“In Queensland, we only experience the cold weather for a short amount of time, so our heating appliances and heated blankets spend months tucked away in the cupboard,” Ms Clinton said.

“This year, in particular, those living in regions affected by the current mice plagues should be extra vigilant to check for damage to appliances that have been in storage.

“Rodents as well as insects can chew cords causing serious damage which could lead to a fire.”

Ms Clinton said the research also revealed 22 percent of Queenslanders had never replaced heating appliances and a further 20 percent admitted they only did so every six to 10 years.

“In storage, these appliances can get dusty, rusty and damaged so it’s important you have a quick look over them before plugging them in this winter,” she said.

“Check for excessive dust build up, rust spots and loose or frayed cords. Faulty and damaged heating appliances are a serious fire risk.”

Ms Clinton reminded Queenslanders it wasn’t just heating appliances that could lead to a fire.

“During winter and throughout the whole year, remember not to leave an oven, barbecue or cooktop unattended, regularly clean your clothes dryer filter, and make sure all smoke alarms are in good working order.”

**Media inquiries: RACQ spokesperson Kirsty Clinton 0438 987 158.**

RACQ is Queensland’s largest club and peak independent motoring organisation. We were formed in 1905 to represent the interests of the State’s first motorists and today campaign for safer drivers, vehicles and roads on behalf of more than 1.7 million members who own the Club. We offer those members a vast range of motoring, insurance, banking, entertainment and travel services and benefits, and each year respond to more than a million calls for roadside assistance.