



**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT**

<p>To : ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE</p> <hr/> <p>From : DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES</p> <hr/> <p>Date : 08 February 1999 Ref : PF/SP</p>	<p>Subject :</p> <p>NATIONAL CONSUMER WEEK - ELECTRIC BLANKET SAFETY CHECK</p>
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PROPOSED DECISION

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

REPORT

The Committee will remember that as part of the Departmental commitment to National Consumer Week 1998, the theme for which was 'safety', it was decided to offer a free, pre-winter, test of electric blankets. The original results were the subject of a report in December and it was intimated that several interested clients had applied too late for their free check. The Department undertook to test these blankets at a later date. This has now been carried out.

BACKGROUND

Electric blankets wear with age and can become sufficiently dangerous to start fires. Every year there are between 800 and 1000 fires caused by faulty electric blankets. In 1996, the last year for which there are figures, these fires resulted in 19 fatalities and 200 nonfatal injuries. Test carried out on a nation-wide basis by trading standards officers showed, that of 4000 blankets tested some 2800 (70%) failed with over 1000 (25%) being potentially lethal. It is therefore important that electric blankets are maintained in good condition. Experience suggests that many people do not have their blanket serviced and this makes a significant contribution to the problem.

TESTING

The Department drew up, in conjunction with Glasgow City Council's Calibration & Test Centre, a schedule of testing, based on the requirements of the relevant British Standards. The blankets were collected from those parties who were unable to deposit their blankets at the Consumer and Money Advice Centre in Motherwell. The blankets were then submitted to the Calibration and Test Centre where they were then tested for integrity and safety by Calibration and Test Centre technicians.

RESULTS

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In the most recent series of tests as referred to at paragraph 1 a total of **sixteen** electric blankets were submitted for test and examination during January and only **three** (19%) were found to be totally satisfactory.

Thirteen (81%) were discovered to have plug / fuse faults which were repaired or rectified prior to subsequent testing, **four** of these were discovered to have unsafe wiring.

Including the tests last reported to Committee a total of 66 blankets have now been the subject of tests; 46 of these had plug and fuse faults, 6 had unsafe wiring rectified during test and 6 were too dangerous to allow continue use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of this Departments commitment to the Council Community Safety Strategy the testing of electric blankets will become an ongoing activity.

Costs will continue to be minimal, based on an average cost of £1 per blanket - attributable to plug and fuse replacement. This cost will be covered by the Departments testing budget.

The Committee is asked to note the report and approve the ongoing safety initiative.

M. Kenzie L. Hurley.