

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE:

Fire blankets

Note: These instructions are for the use of adults and responsible students in an emergency.

1. Introduction

Clothing and hair can easily catch fire when students are working in a school laboratory. Also small fires can suddenly flare up and a fire blanket is often a better option for an untrained person than a fire extinguisher. Purchase of a non-flammable fibreglass fire blanket can help save lives and protect from serious burns. They are quick and easy to use with little training required, are inexpensive and readily available from safety equipment suppliers and hardware stores.

2. Context

- Instructions for emergency fire response should be addressed in the Science Safety Policy and also reflected in your school's emergency planning policies.

3. Safety notes

- It is important to purchase a fire blanket that carries the Australian Standards mark AS 3504.
- Choose a fire blanket large enough to cover an adult rather than a smaller student.
- Hang the fire blanket near a fire extinguisher so all fire-fighting items are close together.
- Secure relevant safety signs above or next to the fire blanket as per AS 2444:2001. The signs should be white on a red background and be visible from 20 metres in all directions.
- Place the fire blanket at a height so both adults and students can quickly pull the hanging tags to release the fire blanket.
- Regularly check the condition of the fire blanket and its quick-release PVC container.
- Familiarise yourself with the operating instructions regularly.
- Only use the fire blanket once and replace with a new fire blanket after use.

4. Regulations, licences and permits

- No permit or licence is required.

5. Equipment

- Fire blanket

6. Operating procedure

1. Stay calm.
2. Remove other students from the vicinity of the casualty or small fire.
3. Remove the original source of heat if safe to do so.
4. Release the blanket by pulling the tags hanging beneath the fire blanket cover.
5. Shake out the blanket so that the longest area is hanging downwards.
6. When clothing is on fire, adopt the procedure 'Stop, Drop, Cover and Roll'.

STOP: the casualty should stop running.

DROP: the casualty should drop to the floor. Wrap the fire blanket around them. Do not throw the blanket over them.

COVER: the casualty should cover their face.

ROLL: the casualty should be rolled back and forth along the ground until flames are extinguished. (See First Aid for burns in section 7 Trouble shooting/emergencies)

7. When using the fire blanket on a small fire, hold the blanket by any handles attached (see diagram below). If there are no handles, then grasp the top of the blanket with your hands upside-down and rotate your wrists inwards so the top of the blanket covers them. This protects your hands from the heat.



FIRE BLANKET

8. Approach the small fire by holding the fire blanket up in front of you and place it slowly over the fire. The blanket should completely cover the fire to reduce the oxygen level in the area on fire. The fire retardant chemicals in the blanket will extinguish the flames so there is no need to smother the fire by applying any further pressure with your hands.
9. Leave the fire blanket in place until the fire cools.

7. Trouble shooting/emergencies

- **First aid:** Treat all thermal burns by holding the burnt area under running water for up to 20 minutes until skin returns to normal temperature. Remove clothing from burnt area unless stuck; cover burn with a non-adherent burns dressing, plastic wrap or loosely applied aluminium foil. Seek urgent medical aid.
- **Smoke inhalation:** Remove casualty from area to fresh air. Sit up and loosen tight clothing. Administer oxygen if available and you are trained in its use. Consider an

asthma inhaler if casualty has difficulty in breathing or is wheezing. If breathing stops commence CPR. Seek urgent medical aid.

- **Maintenance:** Check condition of fire blanket and PVC cover regularly. Promptly replace a used fire blanket.

8. Waste disposal

- Place used fire blankets in general garbage once cooled

9. Related material

Websites for emergency services organisations in Australian states and territories:

- **Australian Capital Territory**
ACT Government, Emergency Services Agency website <http://esa.act.gov.au/>
(Accessed May 2015)
- **New South Wales**
NSW Government, Emergency New South Wales website
<https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/> (Accessed May 2015)
- **Northern Territory**
Northern Territory Government, Police, Fire and Emergency Services website
<http://www.pfes.nt.gov.au/> (Accessed May 2015)
- **Queensland**
Queensland Government, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) website
<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/> (Accessed May 2015)
- **South Australia**
Government of South Australia, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services
Commission website <http://www.safecom.sa.gov.au/site/home.jsp> (Accessed May 2015)
- **Tasmania**
Tasmanian Government, Department of Police and Emergency Management website
<http://www.dpem.tas.gov.au/> (Accessed May 2015)
- **Victoria**
Victorian Government, Emergency services website, <http://www.vic.gov.au/emergencies-safety/emergency-services.html> (Accessed May 2015)
- **Western Australia**
'DFES Alert and Warnings', Government of Western Australia WA Department of Fire
and Emergency Services website <http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/alerts/Pages/default.aspx>
(Accessed May 2015)

References:

'Fire Blankets and Extinguishers', Government of Western Australia WA Department of Fire and
Emergency Services website,
<http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/fire/fireinthehome/pages/fireblanketsandextinguishers.aspx> (Accessed May 2015)

'Safety recommendations' Government of Western Australia WA Department of Fire and
Emergency Services website
<http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/fire/fireinthehome/Pages/safetyrecommendations.aspx> (Accessed May 2015)

Standards Australia. 2001. AS 2444—2001 *Portable fire extinguishers and fire blankets – Selection and location*. Sydney, Australia.

Standards Australia. 2006. AS/NZS 3504:2006 *Fire blankets*. Sydney, Australia.

St John Ambulance Australia 2011, *Australian First Aid*, 4th edition, St John Ambulance Australia: Barton ACT.