

Your Ref: 211/11

10 December 2012  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street  
MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, 3000.



Dear Ms Parkinson

### **ESV RESPONSE TO CORONER'S RECOMMENDATION – DEATH OF JOHN WAILES**

The Coroner, Ms Parkinson, investigated the death of Mr John Wailes and having held an inquest in relation to this death made a recommendation to Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) pursuant to section 72(2) of the *Coroners Act 2008*.

The Coroner made the following recommendation:

*That Energy Safe Victoria take appropriate steps to publicise the risk of home maintenance of electrical power tools and in particular the need for regular testing of such devices.*

An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation will be implemented by ESV:

*ESV will take appropriate steps to publicise the risks of using old and faulty appliances and will include the need to advise the public to check their equipment is in good repair.*

ESV encourages the safe use of electrical appliances and equipment reminding householders to never use ageing or faulty appliances and not to attempt to repair electric appliances. ESV reminds consumers to dispose of old or damaged appliances, to have appliances serviced or inspected according to manufacturer's instructions, and to maintain a range of appliances and equipment free of dust. This advice is available on the ESV website ([www.esv.vic.gov.au](http://www.esv.vic.gov.au) > Consumers > Electrical safety in the home) 'Safe use of electrical appliances and equipment' and ESV has previously issued media advertising 'Electrical Equipment Safety' (presenter Brooke Hanson) which particularly addressed the hazards of electrocution from old appliances.

ESV issues the Energysafe magazine every quarter in hard-copy and electronic format informing and educating the gas and electricity industries, and the general public. ESV reported the 'death of elderly man [Mr Wailes] after using a power drill – possible electrocution', noting the electrical hazards associated with the use of the power drill and cabling<sup>1</sup>. Further related articles have been periodically included, such as 'Electric shock threat because of risky behaviour around the home'<sup>2</sup> and 'Major campaign to warn of the dangers of old electrical installations' which detailed the key messages and activities of the marketing campaign<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Energysafe Magazine, Summer/Autumn 2011, Issue 23, page 3

<sup>2</sup> Energysafe Magazine, Autumn/Winter 2011, Issue 24, page 27

<sup>3</sup> Energysafe Magazine, Winter/Spring, Issue 25, page 7

ESV continues to recommend the installation of residual current devices (safety switches) on power and lighting circuits in all properties, ongoing development of the Electrical Home Safety Inspection Program, and presently has an advertising initiative about ageing and old electrical installations and fittings running which has pop up advertisements on on-line real estate websites and in newspapers, which serve to raise community awareness with respect to electrical safety.

Under the Australian Standard AS/NZS 3000: 2007 'Wiring Rules' applied in Victoria a residual current device (RCD) must be installed when changing or upgrading circuits. RCDs protect people from electrical hazards associated with damaged or unsafe equipment.

ESV has a range of brochures that are available to the public directly on the internet, handed out at trade events, periodically referenced in the magazine, or handed out at public events, for example in 2012 at 'The Royal Melbourne Agricultural Show'. The brochure 'Electrical Safety – Safety Guide' provides a range of advice about electrical hazards present in the home. ESV continues to seek appropriate opportunities to educate the public.

In preparation for coming holiday season ESV has undertaken a below-the-line media awareness campaign to remind Victorians of the dangers of old power tools. This includes a press release, a relevant article in the Energysafe magazine, and re-release of the 'Electrical Equipment Safety' media clip complemented with the current media clip 'Don't Do it Yourself', which reminds consumers to always use a licensed electrician to do electrical work.

Yours sincerely



Paul Fearon  
**DIRECTOR OF ENERGY SAFETY**