



Australian  
Competition &  
Consumer  
Commission



Queensland Office of Fair Trading  
Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Information for suppliers

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT:

## Ethanol-fuelled fireplaces and table top burners

Important information for suppliers of freestanding flue-less ethanol fireplaces and table top ethanol burners

January 2015

Ethanol-fuelled fireplaces and table top burners are increasingly popular in Australia. Reports of injuries associated with ethanol burners are serious and increasing. This guide offers key safety information to industry about the hazards associated with ethanol burners.



### What types of products are covered by the guide

This guide is intended to cover products that are:

- freestanding flue-less ethanol fireplaces that are self-installed and do not require professional installation
- table top decorative burners
- accessories of these products.

Some of the recommendations may also be beneficial for products that require professional installation.

### What are your obligations under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL)?

Australian Standards do not exist for ethanol burners. However, some overseas standards do exist, and can offer a benchmark to address the hazards of ethanol burners. Therefore, treat this alert as a guide for safely supplying ethanol burners.

As a supplier, you are responsible for the safety of your products (whether you manufacture or on-sell). Under the ACL, you must

provide consumer guarantees with the goods you sell.

Consumer guarantees set out that goods are:

- acceptable in quality
- safe and free from defects
- fit for a specific purpose (that a consumer discloses to you prior to the sale).

You cannot waive or avoid these guarantees.

Consumers can take action against you if you breach a consumer guarantee. To best protect yourself, think about how products may be used (including the potential for misuse). Seek independent legal advice if you are unsure of your obligations.

Under the ACL, unsafe goods:

- can be banned from sale
- may be subject to recall action.

See [Product Safety Australia](http://www.productsafety.gov.au) for more information about the ACL.

# What you need to know about: Ethanol-fuelled fireplaces and table top burners

## What are the hazards?

### Refuelling

Flames can be difficult to see, leading users to think the burner is unlit. Fuel (including in the refuelling bottle) may explode if the ethanol burner is refuelled while lit or still warm.

### Stability

If knocked over, the burning ethanol could flow over children, pets and flammable furnishings. This may cause serious burns and property damage.

### Installation

Many ethanol fireplaces and burners do not need specialist installation. Being able to place an ethanol fireplace or burner anywhere in the home or outdoor area can increase the risk of fire and injury.

### The fuel

Ethanol is ethyl alcohol and is highly flammable and should be used with caution and stored safely. Ethanol fuel is similar to methylated spirits.

### Lighting the burner

Most suppliers provide a lighting device which is long enough to safely light the burner; however, lighting the burner with smaller devices (such as matches or cigarette lighters) may cause skin or clothing to be burned.

### Ethanol vapours

Pooled vapours may explode when the user relights the ethanol burner.

## What do I need to know about the product?

### Identification of the manufacturer and importer

Manufacturers or importers should indicate their name, registered trade name or registered trade mark and the address at which they can be contacted on the safe use instructions provided with the product.

### Construction and design

- Products should be made from materials that can withstand the maximum temperature emitted.
- Flame screens and decorative elements should be composed of non-flammable materials. They should also be attached in a way that can withstand the maximum temperature emitted.
- Products should be designed so that the user can safely pour fuel into the chamber without spilling.
- The design of the product should allow the user to clearly see whether the product is alight to prevent accidental refilling while still burning.

## What information should I provide with the product?

### Safety information, user manual and markings

- Users need to know how to use these products safely.
- Safety information should clearly state that the most serious danger is refilling the fuel chamber when the product is still alight.
- All safety information should be either on a label or on the instruction sheet and should be visible, legible, indelible and printed on a single-colour background.

- If the product requires self-installation into a wall recess or on a wall, information should be provided to ensure consideration is given to the flammability surrounding materials, ensuring adequate ventilation and whether any insulation is required.

Products should be provided with safe use instructions. An example is provided on the last page.

## What do I advise customers?

### Installation

- Advise that many ethanol fireplaces and burners do not need specialist installation.
- Caution that placing an ethanol fireplace or burner anywhere in the home outdoor area can increase the risk of fire and injury.

### Ignition and burning

- Provide a lighting device which is long enough to safely light the ethanol burner. Users should have clear guidance (such as a fill-level mark in the fuel chamber) to prevent overfilling.
- Provide instructions for safe use and recommend using a BBQ lighter (or similar device) to remain at a safe distance when lighting the flame.
- Advise that the burner should burn with a stable flame that does not flare up.

### Fuelling and refuelling

- Advise to use the recommended fuel for the particular ethanol burner.
- Caution that the burners are usually refuelled through the same opening as the burner.
- Caution that flames can be difficult to see, leading users to think the burner is unlit.
- Caution that the fuel (including in the refuelling bottle) may explode if the ethanol burner is refuelled while lit or still warm.

# What you need to know about: Ethanol-fuelled fireplaces and table top burners

## Stability

- Advise that large freestanding fireplaces and burners can be unstable if not placed on a level stable surface.
- Advise that table top decorative burners can be unstable and can be accidentally knocked over.
- Advise if knocked over, the burning ethanol could flow over persons and flammable furnishings.
- Refer to the instructions that state the product should only be used on a flat surface and not moved while alight.
- Caution that ethanol burners should not have fittings such as wheels, handles or similar. These may suggest that a user can safely move the product while it is burning.

## Extinguishing

- Advise that ethanol burners should be able to be manually extinguished at any time.
- Advise that the ethanol burner should be provided with a device to extinguish the flame.

## What to do if a customer advises me that they have been injured?

### Mandatory reporting of injury incidents

You have a responsibility if you become aware of an incident that:

- may have involved the use of a product that you supply (or if you provide a related service)
- led to a person's death, serious injury or illness.

You must report the incident to the ACCC if the incident was caused or may have been caused by the product.

### Important notice

The information in this publication is for general guidance only. It does not constitute legal advice, and should not be relied on as a statement of the law. Because it is intended only as a general guide, it may contain generalisations. You should obtain professional advice if you have any specific concern.

The ACCC and the Queensland Office of Fair Trading have made every reasonable effort to provide current and accurate information, but they do not make any guarantees regarding the accuracy, currency or completeness of that information.

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## What does serious injury or illness mean?

An injury or illness is serious if it:

- is an acute physical injury or an illness
- requires medical or surgical treatment by, or under the supervision of, a qualified doctor or nurse.

## How do I make a mandatory report?

You must submit the report:

- to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- within two days of becoming aware of the incident.

You can do this using the ACCC's [online form](#).

## Product safety recalls

When a product safety problem associated with a consumer product is identified, suppliers or government regulators may determine that the product needs to be recalled from the marketplace. A product safety recall can take a number of forms.

For example, the product may be:

- recalled from consumers for a full refund
- taken for repairs or modifications and returned to the consumer.

Further details of recall procedures are available from the [Recalls Australia website](#).

## SAFETY WARNING

**Fireplaces and table top burners that use ethanol based fuel (methylated spirits, bio ethanol, and bio gel) can be dangerous if not handled with care.  
Please follow these instructions to safely use this product.**

### Lighting the product

- Always check that the product isn't alight or smouldering before refuelling. Small flames may be difficult to see.
- Read all safety instructions provided with the fuel.
- Only use the recommended fuel. Do not use any other fuels (such as petrol, diesel or kerosene).
- Never allow children to play with, light or refill this product.
- Clean up any fuel spills before lighting this product. Flames may follow fuel that has been spilt.
- Do not use a cigarette lighter or short matches to light this product. Use only a BBQ lighter or similar device.

### During use

- Keep this product on a flat and stable surface when in use. Do not move it while lit.
- Use away from furniture, curtains, loose clothing, overhanging trees and other flammable materials.
- Only use in a well-ventilated area. Fuel vapours can accumulate in closed areas and ignite without warning.
- Keep flammable liquids and gases away from flames at all times. This includes gas cylinders or items with flammable propellant (such as fly spray).
- Do not allow pets near this product.

### Extinguishing flames

- Always extinguish a product before leaving it unattended. Never leave a lit fireplace or burner unattended at any time.
- Only use the supplied tool to extinguish flames. Never extinguish a fuel fire using water; this will cause the fire to spread.
- Make sure the fireplace or burner has fully cooled before refilling the fuel chamber.

### Storing the product

- Store this product in a safe place when not in use. Always keep out of reach of children.
- Make sure that fuel is stored safely with the lid tightly shut. Always keep away from flames and out of reach of children.
- Always have suitable fire safety equipment, such as a dry powder extinguisher or suitable fire blanket. Store them nearby in case of an accident.

**Please keep this leaflet for future reference.**

**We recommend storing with your burner when not in use.**