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Winter cold brings tragedy to NSW town

Updated: 11:07 pm, Monday, 8 June 2015

The deaths of two young Sydneysiders, who appear to have succumbed to fumes during a long-weekend trip to the foothills of the Blue Mountains, have prompted heater safety warnings as winter continues.

Police believe the man, 32, and woman, 31, might have been overcome by carbon monoxide gas from a makeshift wood-fire heater after shutting the door to the repurposed shipping container where they spent the night.

It's believed the dead couple were visiting the semi-rural property at Kurrajong for the long weekend and were found by the woman's sister early on Monday.

By evening, locals were pinning daffodils to the boundary fence around the large plot of land on Browns Road, which is thought to be owned by the woman's sister and her husband.

Neighbour Stephen Bellamy told AAP the property owner was an out-of-towner who visited occasionally and had fitted out the steel shipping containers with timber and insulation.

But the owner knew the dangers of inadequate ventilation, he said.

'He can't understand what's happened because he always has the door open a few inches himself,' Mr Bellamy said.

Investigators are treating the deaths as a 'tragic' accident.

'It's an horrific incident, especially for one of the relatives to walk into, so our thoughts go out to the family,' Detective Inspector Suzanne Rode-Sanders told reporters at the scene.

'It appears they had some kind of makeshift heater inside the cabin and there wasn't any ventilation, and as a result they may have asphyxiated (from) carbon monoxide poisoning.'

Hawkesbury City Mayor Kim Ford told AAP most locals knew how to safely use wood or gas heaters inside.

But city-dwellers who may only be familiar with electric heaters or air conditioners should be aware of the dangers.

'Indoor fires can be a trap for the unwary,' Mr Ford said.

A Rural Fire Service (RFS) spokeswoman told AAP there had not been any similar deaths in the area in recent years.

The RFS warns NSW residents about the potential dangers of indoor heating every winter but will launch a renewed awareness push in the coming days, she said.

'When it's cold outside people get really tempted to close the door,' she added - but the consequences can be deadly.'

STAYING SAFE WHEN THE MERCURY DROPS:

Adequate ventilation saves lives

Avoid using a gas heater or wood-fire in a confined space

Have heaters, chimneys and flues regularly serviced

Never use a device to heat a space that is not designed for that purpose, eg, a gas cooker

If you or someone else is showing the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, seek medical help urgently by calling 000

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