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Apia urges Victorians to help older neighbours prepare for summer bushfires and storms

With the early beginning to the fire season in Victoria, Apia, the leading national insurer for Over 50's, is urging Victorians to help their older neighbours prepare for the coming bushfire and storm season.

Apia's research found that fewer than half (49%) of Over 50s living in an area of risk have done maintenance around their homes to prepare for the coming season, while a quarter (24%) living in an area of risk have not made any modifications to their homes to protect against summer storms.

Apia spokesperson, Angela Wilkinson, said that these statistics, while concerning, were unfortunately not unexpected.

"We know that some maintenance tasks around the home get more difficult or dangerous as you age, such as checking the roof tiles or clearing gutters, and some of these important pre-season tasks can get put to one side as a result.

"More than 1,500 older Australians are hospitalised each year[†] after falling from a ladder around the home," Ms Wilkinson explained, "So we are urging people to think of their older family, friends and neighbours in the community and help them in their storm and bushfire season preparations.

"If you have an older neighbour who lives at home by themselves, or know of someone in the community who may need some assistance, knock on their door or give them a call to make sure they are prepared.

"It can be something as simple as offering to clear your neighbours' gutters, or clearing some overhanging trees," Ms Wilkinson said.

Apia's advice for bushfire preparedness includes:

- Cut back any overhanging trees or shrubs.
- Check the condition of your roof and replace any damaged or missing tiles.
- Remove leaves from the roof, gutters and downpipes and fit quality metal leaf guards where possible.
- Keep your lawn short and the backyard tidy.
- Store woodpiles and flammable materials covered and away from the house.
- Make sure hoses are in working order.

Apia's top storm and cyclone preparedness tips:

- Check gutters and downpipes - backed up gutters can send water flowing into the home during heavy rains.



- Check roof for damaged, loose tiles or raised corners of corrugated sheets - a roof in good repair is more likely to withstand high winds and keep water out.
- Trim overgrown tree branches. Check with the local council if you're unsure about which trees / branches you can cut. Avoid doing this near power lines.
- Remove or secure loose items around the garden which could be blown about in high winds. In strong winds, these things can become airborne and turn into missiles which can cause severe damage to your home, or even injure you or your neighbours.

- Ends -

Notes to editors:

Newspoll conducted an independent internet survey of 3,283 Australians, 18 years and over, across a full national sample in 2015, including 1,335 aged 50 and over. Data was collected in line with ISO 20252 - Market, Social and Opinion Research and has been weighted with current ABS population demographics to ensure any extrapolation of results is representative of age, sex and area.

[†] Hospitalised Injury in Older Australians, 2011-12, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

For further information and to arrange interviews, please contact:

Angela Wilkinson
Corporate Affairs, Apia
M: 0477 395 119
E: media@apia.com.au

Apia is a specialist insurance provider for people aged over 50. Providing a wide range of home and contents, car, caravan, motor home, boat and life insurance solutions tailored to the over 50s life stage. Apia has a network of branches across Australia serving almost 750,000 policy holders and offers Private Health Insurance, underwritten by nib, offering a range of Hospital and Extras covers specifically tailored to meet the varying and individual needs of Australians aged over 50. For more information on Apia visit www.apia.com.au