

Safety advice to people buying 'hoverboards'



The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has urged people who have bought 'hoverboards' to heed Trading Standards' advice after a huge number of the self-balancing scooters imported from abroad were assessed as unsafe and detained at the border.

National Trading Standards revealed more than 17,000 of the devices were examined at UK entry points in recent weeks and over 15,000 of these were seized.

Concerns include significant safety issues with plugs, cabling, chargers and batteries as well as with cut-off switches meant to prevent the devices overheating.

Assistant Chief Officer Lewis Ramsay, the SFRS director of prevention and protection, said: "Electrical items containing flaws of this kind pose a serious fire risk so it's important people are vigilant and heed the excellent advice from Trading Standards.

"We understand many of these devices will have been bought as Christmas gifts and so people may be tempted to think the safety issues won't actually result in a fire happening to them. That really could be fatal mistake."

He continued: "A fire in the home can be absolutely devastating and sadly there is often a peak in house fires over the winter holiday period.

"Electrical items are one of the factors we know contribute to this rise and if people do have hoverboards that don't meet the required standards then they are putting themselves and

others in danger.”

Some hoverboards have been known to come supplied with plugs that are not designed for use in Britain – these plugs do not have fuses and are at risk of overheating.

The fuse is an essential safety feature that will ‘blow’ if an appliance develops a fault, cutting off the electricity. Without a fuse, or if the wrong fuse is fitted, the result could be a fire that devastates a home and threatens lives.

Anyone who has purchased a hoverboard should have received instructions with the device, detailing which fuse should be present in the plug and the advice from SFRS is to make sure the correct fuse is present.

People should also check the voltage of products is 230V, 50Hz (the UK’s usual domestic voltage) and that they are fitted with a three-pin UK plug or charger that is marked as conforming to British Standard BS 1363.

Unsafe electrical devices are just one of many potential fire hazards in the home and SFRS is clear people need to consider the risks and take small steps to prevent festive tragedies.

ACO Ramsay added: “Electrical items, cooking and smoking materials all pose significant dangers and fire really can happen to anyone.

“If it does strike then having working smoke alarms could be the difference between life and death. They are absolutely essential devices that no home can ever afford to go without.

“We want people to consider the advice that’s available from ourselves and our partners and if anyone needs our help, or knows someone who might, then please get in touch with us so we can provide that support.”

If a fire involving an appliance does break out people should switch off the mains electrical supply if it is safe to do so

and immediately get out of the property.

Closing the door where the fire is behind them as they go will help to protect the escape route and prevent the fire spreading quickly.

As with any fire, the advice from SFRS is for everyone to get out, stay out and dial 999. Further advice on emergency escape plans can be found at www.firescotland.gov.uk.

Where electrical devices are likely to be used by children parents should make sure that everyone in the home is aware of safety practices regarding charging the device.

Free home fire safety visits are available from SFRS by calling the freephone number 0800 073 1999, by texting 'FIRE' to 80800 or by filling in an online form at www.firescotland.gov.uk.