

WORD OF THE MONTH

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fridging

- **noun**: the act of stealing from an outdoor refrigerator.

THE STORY BEHIND THE WORD OF THE MONTH

In 2010 a number of newspaper reports from Western Australia and Queensland made reference to certain criminal activities described as **fridging**. The activity involves stealing items from outdoor refrigerators, and the word derives from *fridge*, an abbreviation of *refrigerator*. The first evidence for **fridging** is found in a Perth newspaper:

A new trend of criminal activity called **fridging**, stealing alcohol and other goods from the rear of a home, has increased in The Vines area. (*Advocate*, 27 January 2010)

Several months later numerous incidents of **fridging** were reported in the media as having taken place in the northern Queensland town of Blackwater: 'The incidents of "**fridging**" in Blackwater are on the rise and police are warning home owners to be vigilant.' (*Blackwater Herald*, 29 June 2010) In subsequent months, press reports suggested that **fridging** had spread to neighbouring towns such as Ayr and Home Hill.

The common theme of **fridging** incidents, as reported in newspapers, is the ease of access to refrigerators kept outside the home, on decks and patios, and in backyard sheds and garages. In hotter parts of Australia it is a common practice to keep a second fridge for cold drinks (such as beer) in outdoor areas, and this is undoubtedly why **fridging** is an activity largely confined to Queensland and the Northern Territory. Many reports mentioned the prevalence of children and young people committing these crimes, with the main incentive being easy access to alcohol, especially for those who couldn't buy it legally:

It's called **fridging**—teens entering backyards across the Gladstone region and stealing alcohol from patio fridges. Tannum Sands resident Jenny Cross is getting fed up, after being victim of **fridging** three times. 'It happened ... twice before Christmas and last Tuesday night.' Each time the teens cleaned the alcohol out of their fridge. (*Gladstone Observer*, 20 January 2011)

In the *Northern Territory News*, one policeman suggested a simple precaution to keep people safe from **fridging**:

'It is recommended that you do not store tempting items in unsecure outdoor fridges', Sen-Sgt Jorgensen said. 'Unfortunately this just encourages recalcitrants to treat the neighbourhood as their supermarket.' (20 March 2014)

This same report also informed readers about the solution to the problem ultimately resorted to by Katrina Fong Lim, Darwin's Lord Mayor. She was **fridged** three times in 2012 and 'eventually unplugged the appliance for good'.

Fridging is being considered for inclusion in the second edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*.



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