

## Chimney Smoke

Smoke from chimneys on residential premises can be a nuisance to neighbours and interfere with normal daily activities. If severe enough, it can be detrimental to people's health.

If you own a wood heater, it is your responsibility to ensure your appliance operates correctly and you only burn dry, seasoned firewood. An excessively smoking wood heater can cause air pollution and may contain fine particles that can affect people's lungs. These fine particles can be particularly dangerous to the very young, the elderly and people who have existing respiratory problems.

This fact sheet includes information that can help residents to reduce smoke and meet legal requirements.

## Be A Good Neighbour!

Take the time to talk to neighbours and find out their concerns. In many cases an agreement can be reached that satisfies everyone's needs. If you own a wood heater, make a habit of checking the chimney for excessive smoke.

## What Does Council Consider When Investigating A Smoke Nuisance?

An authorised officer, when determining whether smoke is a nuisance, must take into account whether:

- the smoke has travelled to neighbouring premises; and
- the nature, extent, colour, smell or density of the smoke is such as to constitute an unreasonable interference with the enjoyment of the neighbouring premises by persons occupying those premises; and
- for solid fuel heaters, a visible plume of smoke extends into the air above neighbouring premises from the flue or chimney of the heater more than 15 minutes after the heater is lit.

## Penalties Apply for Causing A Nuisance From Smoke

It is an offence under the *Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016* to create a nuisance caused by smoke and penalties may apply. If the matter is ongoing, Council may issue the person causing the nuisance with a Nuisance Abatement Notice, which specifies a certain period within which the offender must rectify the problem. Such notices may also be issued verbally in the first instance if the matter is considered severe enough. Council also has the authority to expiate an offence by way of an on-the-spot-fine. The enforcement approach will depend on the severity of the concern and Council's Enforcement Policy.

### WOOD HEATER CHECKLIST

- ☐ Burn well seasoned wood.
- ☐ Use only dry kindling, paper and firelighters to start the fire.
- ☐ Keep your wood supply covered.
- ☐ Have your flue inspected and cleaned yearly.
- ☐ Keep your fire burning brightly.

### Need More Information?

For more details regarding wood heaters and smoke nuisance please contact Council on 8408 1111.



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# Chimney Smoke Fact Sheet



## Choose Your Firewood Carefully

The dryness of firewood makes all the difference to the amount of smoke emitted from a chimney. Wet or green wood causes excessive smoke and doesn't generate as much heat. Dry wood is generally lighter in colour and should make a hollow cracking sound when banged together. Wet or green wood is heavier and usually darker in colour. Do not use wood products such as chipboard, as they contain formaldehyde, or treated or painted timber, as the smoke from these products is hazardous to the health of others. Stack wood under cover in a dry ventilated area.

Wood should be air-dried for at least eight months before burning. Keep wood under cover and stack in a criss-cross manner to allow air to circulate.

## Burn The Fire Brightly

Start with dry kindling and fully open the air controls. Do not use oil or fuel soaked rags. Once the fire is well established, gradually add larger wood pieces, making sure not to choke the fire by overloading it with logs. An efficient fire should have bright swirling flames and red glowing embers with little or no smoke coming from the chimney. Keep air controls open at night.

Avoid shutting down the air controls (damper) overnight as this also causes excessive smoke. Let the fire burn out completely overnight – an insulated house should hold enough heat to keep your house warm until morning.



### How To Use A Wood Heater Successfully

#### OPERATION – SECRETS TO A SUCCESSFUL BURN

- Use dry seasoned timber which maximises heat release during combustion.
- Adjust the air damper to allow enough air flow to provide oxygen for combustion.
- Make sure the fire is burning brightly so that there is enough heat for complete combustion.
- Allow enough time for complete burning of all of the fuel.

#### CHOOSE THE RIGHT WOOD

- The wood you buy should be dry and well seasoned if you plan to burn it this season.
- Buy a hardwood such as Mallee or Redgum and avoid softwoods such as Pine as they tend to contain resins which can cause a smokey odour.
- Use dry seasoned kindling to start your fire and add larger pieces once red hot coals have established.

#### WOOD STORAGE

- Store your wood off the ground.
- Stack the wood loosely in a criss-cross manner to allow airflow to circulate freely.
- Split any unseasoned wood and also store in a criss-cross manner.
- Keep your wood stack under a roof or covered to keep dry.

#### BURNING

- Never burn garbage, painted timber or particle board.
- Never use treated wood such as Permapine.
- Never burn plastics or rubber items.
- Keep your fire box clean and have your flue cleaned every year to remove the creosote build up.
- Go outside and check your flue. If after 20 minutes there is still smoke coming from the flue you may need to adjust the fuel or air.

## Other Things To Consider Before You Buy A Wood Heater

Smoke from a wood heater is a difficult problem to resolve because most of them (regardless of their type and technology) will tend to emit smoke at different times. Fires and wood heaters in residential areas which are in close proximity to other homes are more likely to cause a nuisance on a still winter's night compared with those in rural areas which are often a considerable distance from other dwellings, resulting in the possible "dilution" of smoke. Consider the potential impacts that a wood heater may have on your neighbours.

If you decide to purchase a wood heater, ensure that it is the correct size. A heater too large for a home will need to be turned down, reducing its efficiency and causing excessive smoke. Make sure that the heater is constructed and installed correctly and meets the Australian Standards (AS4013 and AS2918) and appropriate development approvals are obtained prior to installation.