

Cleaner woodfires

Help your chimney
quit smoking



Smoke from wood heaters and open fireplaces is a significant source of air pollution in Victoria during autumn and winter months. A major component of wood smoke pollution is fine particles.

This pollution affects air quality and can also impact on our health and quality of life.

Very small particles are generated whenever wood is burned. Home wood heaters are a significant source of such particles in the atmosphere during winter.

Wood smoke pollution can impact on people's health, especially people who have existing lung or heart conditions such as asthma.

Wood smoke can also be a neighbourhood nuisance by affecting people's ability to enjoy their home and the outdoors.

Often your neighbours will not realise their wood smoke is affecting you. It is best to discuss the problem with them to negotiate a solution.

If you cannot reach agreement after talking to your neighbour, you can contact an environmental health officer at your local council for advice.

The 'Quick tips for reducing pollution' section of this brochure provides some practical information about reducing wood smoke. You can find more handy tips at EPA's website, www.epa.vic.gov.au/air

You should not burn



Many woods should not be burned, including:

- unseasoned wood
- painted wood
- damp wood
- treated wood, such as treated pine used for fencing (pictured)
- particle board



Plastic or household rubbish should not be burned.



Don't burn clippings from the garden or garden waste such as leaves or grass.

Reducing wood heater smoke pollution

Reducing use of your wood heater or fireplace, particularly on still days, is the best way to reduce wood smoke pollution.

If you use wood heating, the impact on air quality can be reduced by correct operation, which means:

- regular maintenance
- selecting suitable firewood
- lighting and burning efficiently.

Selecting firewood

Always use dry, seasoned wood. Unseasoned wood has a higher moisture content. This wood is hard to ignite, slow to burn, and produces more smoke and less heat.

You can save money by purchasing firewood in the early spring and storing it in a well ventilated shed or other covered area until the following winter. It is best to stack wood in a criss-cross pattern for at least eight months prior to use. To tell if wood is dry/seasoned, knock two pieces together. You should hear a loud, hollow crack.

Efficient lighting and burning

Correctly operating a wood heater can minimise pollution.

A fire should never be dull or smoky, it should always burn brightly. Never overload your wood heater. Leave the wood heater on a high burn rate for 20 minutes after lighting or after adding more fuel.

Purchasing and installing a wood heater

Open fireplaces are up to five times more polluting than wood heaters that meet the Australian Standard (AS/NZS 4013:1999).

Purchase a wood heater that meets this standard and ensure it is installed by a licensed person.

EPA has introduced a waste management policy (No. S 174) requiring that all heaters manufactured and sold in Victoria are certified to meet the standard.





Quick tips for reducing pollution

- Only burn dry, seasoned, untreated wood.
- Correctly light your wood heater - get a hot fire going quickly with plenty of paper and small kindling.
- Never overload your wood heater by placing too much wood in the fire.
- Never leave your wood heater to smoulder overnight. Do not adjust the control to its closed position. Doing this starves the fire of oxygen, producing more smoke and air pollution - and less heat.
- Ensure that your flue or chimney is higher than your neighbour's roof line - this will help prevent smoke from your fire entering your neighbour's home.
- Regularly check the inside of the firebox - look for cracks or changes to the surface.
- Regularly remove ash from the firebox.
- Clean the flue at least once a year.



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