

Useful Information

Smoke Nuisance – Complaint Resolution

Wood burning internal fires and open back yard fires are becoming increasingly popular in the Ipswich City Council area. However the smoke emanating from these sources can cause a nuisance, air pollution and can affect people's health. As a result not everyone has the same enthusiasm for these types of heating or waste disposal and Council is receiving an increasing number of complaints.

Talk to your neighbour

In most cases, talking to your neighbour about the issue is the best way to approach this concern. Neighbours sometimes don't realise the affect that the smoke is having on others and will usually rectify the problem without Council needing to be involved.

If this approach is unsuccessful you are then able to contact Council to intervene and a complaint can be lodged with Councils Customer Call Centre on 3810 6666

On receiving an initial complaint Council will forward a warning letter and advisory fact sheet to the address, this approach will usually rectify most situations.

If Council receives a further complaints regarding the property an officer will attend and investigate to determine the appropriate action to be taken.

Consider your neighbours

When utilizing your internal wood fire:

When you first start to use your fire ensure that you understand how to use the system correctly so that it burns efficiently and does not issue excessive smoke.

- Check the flue/chimney when the fire is first lit for the amount of smoke that your fire is producing.
- Regularly check the fire while in use to ensure the fire is burning efficiently
- Check the direction the smoke is drifting
- Determine if the smoke is likely to cause a nuisance

For Backyard Burning

- If burning off in the back yard, ensure that the fire is not larger than 2 metres by 2 meters, if it is, you will need to get approval from your local Fire Brigade.
- Advise your neighbours if you are going to burn off prior to starting.
- Do a general check:
 1. Ensure that the wind direction will cause a smoke nuisance to neighbours
 2. Ensure neighbours do not have washing on the line

Reducing smoke emissions from your Chimney

Choose 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 people's health.

Stack wood under cover in a dry ventilated area

Wood should be air-dried for at least eight months before it is ready to burn. Keep wood under cover and stack in a criss-cross manner to allow air to circulate. Ensure wood is stacked off the ground.

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. An efficient fire should have bright swirling flames and red glowing embers with little or no smoke coming from the chimney. The less smoke, the hotter and more efficient the fire.

Keep air controls open at night

Do not shut down the air controls overnight as this also causes excessive smoke. Let the fire burn out completely overnight – an insulated house will hold enough heat to keep your house warm until morning.

Check your chimney

All wood heaters tend to smoke when first lit. However, the smoke should not last for more than 15 minutes, this will also occur when putting on more fuel. Regularly check the chimney, if there is excessive smoke, reduce the fuel load and open the airflows.

Cleaning and maintaining your chimney

Clean and maintain your chimney regularly. At the beginning and end of winter each year, clean and inspect the chimney, fireplace and/or firebox. If you have a combustion heater, regularly check glass door for cracks, and door ropes and seal for deterioration. Check the firebox for rust and make sure that the firebricks are not damaged. Every second year the air slide control should be lubricated with high temperature grease.

Beware that if your fire causes a nuisance a Maximum Penalty of 50 penalty units can be imposed.

If used properly fires should not cause nuisance to neighbours, so if lighting up be considerate and take the appropriate measures.