Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Open fires and wood-burning stoves

A practical guide

Open fires and wood-burning stoves have risen in popularity over recent years. This means we now see more smoke from chimneys which has a negative effect on air quality. This can cause breathing problems such as asthma attacks and contribute to other health conditions.

This leaflet provides simple steps for those that use wood burning stoves or open fires to reduce environmental and health impacts.

It will also benefit you directly by:

- maximising efficiency, meaning you burn less fuel
- reducing maintenance costs
- keeping chimneys in a better condition

woodsure
READY
TO BURN

Fuel use

Consider burning less

Think about why you are lighting your fire,
as well as how much fuel you use. Is it necessary?
If your house is already warm enough and you
don't need to burn, not burning is the simplest way
of reducing your costs and minimising your impact.
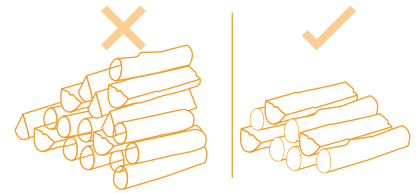
Buy 'Ready to Burn' fuel

If you want to burn immediately look for the logo
as a guarantee of good quality dry wood.

http://woodsure.co.uk/firewood-ready-to-burn/

woodsure READY TO BURN

Season freshly chopped wood before burning

Wet or unseasoned wood, often sold in nets,
is cheaper to buy, but it needs to be seasoned (dried)
before burning. Wet wood contains moisture
which creates smoke and harmful particulates
when burned. This can damage your stove and chimney.
It also means you're losing out on heat for your home.

Freshly chopped? **Let it dry for 2 years**

If you use Housecoal, use approved smokeless fuels instead

These produce less carbon and smoke compared to
house-coal when burned. They also provide more heat
so cost less money to heat your home.

### DO NOT burn treated waste wood (eg old furniture) or household rubbish

Treated waste wood can emit harmful fumes
and household rubbish may include plastics that can release
toxic pollutants, such as arsenic, into your home when burnt.

Maintain your open fire/stove

Regularly maintain and service your stove (eg annually)

This means it will work better and will generate more heat
from what you burn. Always operate your stove in line with
the manufacturer's guidance and only burn permitted fuels.

Get your chimney swept regularly (up to twice a year)

During use particulates build up in the chimney reducing
the efficiency and increasing the risk of chimney fires.
It is better to use a qualified chimney sweep who will be
able to advise you on good burning practices for your
open fire or stove.
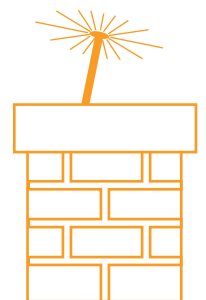
Sticking to these simple rules helps to keep particulates and
smoke down and ensure optimum efficiency and safety.

Choose the right appliance

Wood-burning stoves produce much less smoke than open-fires. If you are thinking of buying a stove then consider purchasing one that has been approved for use in smoke control areas by Defra, or an Ecodesign Ready stove.

These have been tested to high standards to demonstrate low smoke emissions.

Stoves which have not undergone these tests do not carry this assurance.

Know the law in Smoke Control Areas

The law in Smoke Control Areas

Many urban areas are smoke control areas. In these areas you can only use:

- authorised smokeless fuels
  https://smokecontrol.defra.gov.uk/fuels.php

  or

- exempted appliances
 https://smokecontrol.defra.gov.uk/appliances.php

You could face a fine of up to £1,000 if you break the rules.

Your local authority website should tell you if you are in a smoke control area

SMOKE CONTROL AREAS

Outdoor burning

Be considerate towards your neighbours when lighting bonfires, outdoor burners and BBQs and always take care not to cause a smoke nuisance.

Dispose of garden waste through your Local Council's disposal scheme.
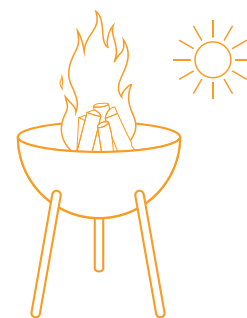
Benefits of following these steps

By following these simple steps, you will reduce the harmful health effects that are caused by inhaling smoke; including breathing problems such as asthma attacks.

What you can do

What you can do to help reduce the harmful effects from smoke:

- Think if you have to burn
- Burn seasoned wood (including Ready to Burn)
- Maintain stoves and sweep chimneys