

What you can do

By making a few simple changes you can enjoy the warmth of your wood heater and reduce wood smoke and its impact on you and other people in your community.



Use only small logs of seasoned, untreated wood



Store wood under cover in a dry, ventilated area



Use several small logs rather than one large log



Increase the air supply if you see your chimney smoking



Maintain a bright flame, never let your heater smoulder

Tips to reduce smoke...

- Choose small, dry logs – unseasoned wood has a high moisture content which makes a smoky fire.
- When lighting a cold heater, use plenty of kindling to establish a good fire quickly.
- When refuelling your fire, open the air controls to full for a few minutes then add some newspaper and small pieces of wood. Keep the air controls open for 10-15 minutes after you have added the fuel. This will produce a less smoky fire.
- Have your chimney cleaned every year. Creosote is a sticky black residue that can build up in your chimney – it restricts air flow and makes your fire harder to start. A creosote-clogged chimney can spill smoke into your room when you open the heater, and even catch fire, putting your home at risk.

Find out more...

To find out more about reducing wood smoke pollution visit www.epa.nsw.gov.au/woodsmoke or call your local council.

For information on the health impacts of wood smoke, visit www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/environmental/wood_smoke_pub.html or contact your local Public Health Unit



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Stay warm breathe easy

Wood Smoke Reduction Program

Wood smoke
affects your
health and
pollutes the air



What is wood smoke?

Wood smoke is produced from burning solid fuel in a wood heater or open fireplace. Wood smoke contains a complex mixture of pollutants and toxics, mainly fine particles, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), benzene, xylene and formaldehyde. A poorly operated wood heater or open fireplace can cause high levels of these pollutants around your home and neighbourhood.

Up to 85% of winter fine particle emissions come from wood heaters in some areas of NSW.



What are the health effects of wood smoke pollutants?

Fine particles

Fine particles in smoke can cause short-term irritations in the eyes, nose and throat. If fine particles are breathed deep into the lungs, it can aggravate existing heart and lung conditions such as angina, bronchitis, emphysema and asthma. According to the World Health Organization any exposure to fine particles can cause health problems.

Carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless and odourless gas. CO deprives the body of oxygen and affects the reflexes. At low levels of exposure, people can experience headaches, fatigue or chest pain; at moderate levels, flu-like symptoms; and high concentrations may result in death. A poorly installed wood heater can cause elevated levels of CO inside a home.

PAHs

PAHs can cause eye irritations, headaches and serious damage to the respiratory, nervous, reproductive and immune systems. Exposure to high levels can cause cancer. PAH levels are highest during winter when wood heaters and open fireplaces are frequently used.

Who is at risk?

Wood smoke pollution affects everyone. It is bad for your health, the health of your neighbours and the health of your wider community. The effects depend on how much wood smoke you have been exposed to and for how long, your age and your current state of health. The people who are at the greatest risk are:

- infants and young children
- those suffering from existing heart, lung and vascular conditions such as asthma, angina, emphysema and diabetes
- frail and elderly people.

Wood smoke can affect your health, and also the health and wellbeing of your neighbourhood.

When wood smoke is a problem in your local area...

- Avoid any outdoor physical activity.
- If you suffer from heart or lung disease and you notice symptoms, ensure you take your medication, rest, and seek medical advice if symptoms do not settle.