

Heating your home

A guide to heating your home,
appropriate fuels and smoke.



Tamworth
Borough Council

All of Tamworth Borough is a Smoke Control Area. It is important to know the rules, or you may unknowingly be committing an offence.

In a smoke control area, you can only burn fuel on the list of authorised fuels, or any of the following ‘smokeless’ fuels, unless you’re using an exempt appliance:

- anthracite
- semi-anthracite
- gas
- low volatile steam coal

Unauthorised fuels, such as wood, can only be burned in exempt appliances such as some boilers, cookers, and stoves. You must also only use the types of fuel that the manufacturer says can be used in the appliance.

A full list of authorised fuels, and exempt appliances, can be found on the DEFRA website:

smokecontrol.defra.gov.uk/fuels

Smoke Control Legislation

- **Quality (Domestic Solid Fuels Standards) (England) Regulations 2020** that outlaw the sale of wet wood and house coal, which are the most polluting fuels. Smokeless coal must also contain less than 2% sulphur.
- **Clean Air Act 1993** - Section 20 creates smoke control areas.
- **Environmental Protection Act 1990** – smoke may constitute a statutory nuisance under this act.

Facts & Advice

- **DO:** make sure your wood is 'Ready to Burn'. Ready to Burn wood fuels give you more heat for each piece. The Ready to Burn fuel certification scheme ensures compliance with the **Air Quality (Domestic Solid Fuels Standards) (England) Regulations 2020** that outlaw the sale of wet wood and house coal, which are the most polluting fuels
- **DO:** Wet wood should be seasoned or dried for up to 2 years, or kiln dried at a controlled temperature, before use to get it to 20% moisture content or less. In the absence of a moisture meter, radial cracks and loose bark tend to show logs are dry. If you knock them together, you should hear a dull 'thud'.
- **DO:** Maintain and service your stove annually This means it will work better and will generate more heat from what you burn. Always use your stove in line with the manufacturer's guidance.
- **DO:** Get your chimney swept regularly (up to twice a year) During use soot builds 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. For example: avoid slumbering your stove overnight.
- **DO:** Install a carbon monoxide monitor, this will alert you to dangerous fumes and reduce your risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- **DO NOT:** Mix smokeless fuel and wood, you won't get the best from either fuel.
- **DO NOT:** Store wood next to Log Burners or near to open Fires in an attempt to dry them, these will become hot and can auto ignite from the radiated heat.
- **DO NOT:** buy a stove which is too big (too powerful) for the room. You'll get too hot and be likely to shut the air controls too much. The burning temperature will drop, fuel is wasted, and pollution increased.
- **DO NOT:** burn household waste or improvised materials. We understand that heating your home is expensive given the energy crisis, and it may be tempting to explore alternative sources to burn. There are several important reasons why you should avoid this:

- It can emit harmful fumes and toxic pollutants, such as arsenic, into your home when burnt.
- Inappropriate sources may damage your stove – only use fuels according to the manufacturer’s guidance.
- An increased fire risk is likely, including a risk of materials exploding.
- Unintended sources of fuel tend to be poor quality sources of heat anyway, either burning too fast, just producing smoke, or no heat at all.

Top 10 things you should never burn in a stove or fireplace

1. Wet wood. Wet, or unseasoned, firewood can contain up to 45 percent water. When wet wood burns, it produces more smoke than heat.
2. Christmas trees. It may be tempting to cut up and burn your live Christmas tree in your wood-burning stove. In addition to not being properly seasoned, the evergreen wood contains high levels of resin. These resins burn quickly and can pop, causing a risk of a chimney fire.
3. Plastics & household rubbish. Any type of household rubbish, whether its bubble wrap or empty bottles, should not be burned in a fireplace. Plastics release toxic chemicals, including hydrochloric acid, sulphur dioxide, dioxins, and heavy metals, that are dangerous for your health and bad for the environment.
4. Painted or treated wood including wooden pallets, plywood, particle board, or chipboard. These can contain toxic chemicals that are released when burned. Those chemicals are dangerous for you and your family and can damage your fireplace. They can also contain metal nails or similar that can damage your stove when heated.
5. Any type of coloured paper. Paper with coloured print, such as wrapping paper, magazines, cereal boxes, and pizza boxes, may release noxious, corrosive, or carcinogenic gases when burned.
6. Leaves and other garden waste. You don’t know what irritants or toxins contained within them, which may be harmful to health.

7. Fire accelerants or fire starters. Never use accelerants, such as kerosene, gasoline, or grill starter fluid to help get your fire started. The accelerants or fire starters can cause flare ups or heat your fire to extremely high temperatures that are unsafe for your fireplace and chimney.
8. Dryer lint, clothes, or fabrics. They can release toxic chemicals into your home and up your chimney.
9. Cardboard. Cardboard is typically treated and can release toxic chemicals when burned, especially if it has been printed with a logo.
10. Charcoal. Typically associated with BBQs, charcoal burns too hot for most stoves, chimneys and flues and can damage them. Charcoal also releases a lot of carbon monoxide, which although safe outdoors, would be potentially dangerous indoors.

Firewood storage tips

- Protect from direct rain
- Allow air to circulate
- Do not closely cover logs, leave them on wet ground or open to the elements

Starting a fire

- Use plenty of small kindling / sticks or suitable firelighter so that the fire is quickly established. Slightly larger logs should go on top.
- Set all air controls to fully open, light the fire and close the door.
- Allow a reasonable burn for 10 to 15 minutes. The flames should fill the box without being sucked up the chimney.
- Re-fuel now with slightly larger logs and allow a few minutes to establish. It is only when these small logs are burning that full size logs should be added.

What should I do if I have a complaint about smoke?

If bothered by smoke, in the first instance it is best to approach your neighbour and explain the problem. You might feel awkward, but they may not be aware of the distress they are causing, and it will hopefully make them more considerate in the future. If this fails, please contact us using the below contact details and we will investigate as required.



Contact us

For further information, advice, or to make a complaint, please contact:

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Marmion House, Lichfield Street, Tamworth, Staffordshire, B79 7BZ

Tel: 01827 709709

Email: enquiries@tamworth.gov.uk

www.tamworth.gov.uk

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please phone: 01827 709709