



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Smoke Control Areas: Do you know the rules?

## A practical guide

Open fires and wood-burning stoves have risen in popularity over recent years. Smoke from burning causes air pollution which harms the health of millions.

We can work together to improve the quality of the air we breathe.

Did you know that certain areas of the country are designated as 'smoke control areas'? This leaflet provides simple guidance for those that need to use wood burning stoves or open fires in these areas to ensure you don't fall foul of the law as well as benefiting you directly by:

- Maximising efficiency, meaning you will burn less fuel
- Reducing the risk of chimney fires
- Reducing smoke and carbon monoxide which can be harmful to you and your neighbours



January 2024



## What is a smoke control area?

A smoke control area is a legally defined area where you cannot emit smoke from a chimney.

**You can be issued a financial penalty of between £175 to £300 if you break this rule.**

You must not buy an unauthorised fuel for use in a smoke control area unless it is to be used in an exempt appliance.

**You can be fined up to £1,000 if you break this rule.**



## How do I know if I live in one?

To find out which areas of England are designated smoke control areas, please visit the [smoke control area map](#).

Please note, the data on this map is indicative only and you should always contact your local authority to confirm if you live in a smoke control area.

<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

## What appliance can I use?

### Defra Exempted Stoves

These include wood-burning and multi-fuel stoves. These have been rigorously tested and demonstrate low smoke emissions when used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and with the recommended fuel.

Look for products on the list of Defra exempted appliances at <https://smokecontrol.defra.gov.uk/appliances.php>



## What fuel can I burn?

This depends on the type of appliance you use.

Wood can only be burned on exempted appliances and must be dry and ready to burn.

<http://woodsurre.co.uk/firewood-ready-to-burn/>



Non-exempted appliance users can only burn approved solid fuels.

<https://smokecontrol.defra.gov.uk/fuels.php>

### **DO NOT burn treated waste wood (eg old furniture, pallets or fence panels) or household rubbish**

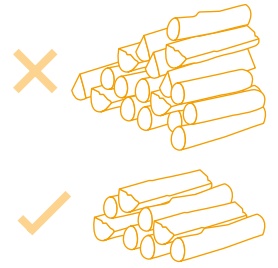
Treated waste wood and household rubbish can emit harmful fumes and toxic pollutants, such as arsenic, into your home when burnt.



## What can I do to reduce my impact?

### Consider burning less

Think about why you are lighting your fire as well as how much fuel you use. If your appliance is secondary heating consider burning less. If your home 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.



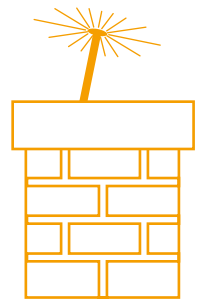
### Maintain and service your stove annually

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.

### 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.



## 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 or consider composting it.

Remember most garden waste will not be dry and can emit a lot of smoke.

Further guidance can be found here: [Reducing air pollution from outdoor burning](#)

## Benefits of following these steps

By following these simple steps to burn efficiently and safely, you will help reduce air pollution and reduce the harmful health effects to you and your neighbours that are caused by inhaling smoke including breathing problems such as asthma attacks.



## What you can do

- Check if you are in a smoke control area
- Think if you have to burn
- Ensure you only use the correct appliance or fuel
- Maintain stoves and sweep chimneys
- Install a carbon monoxide monitor, this will alert you to dangerous fumes and reduce your risk of carbon monoxide poisoning
- For more good practice tips check advice on [www.Burnright.co.uk](http://www.Burnright.co.uk) or [www.which.co.uk/reviews/wood-burning-stoves/article/guides](http://www.which.co.uk/reviews/wood-burning-stoves/article/guides)