



Media release



Environment Protection Authority
GPO Box 2607 Adelaide SA 5001
211 Victoria Square Adelaide SA 5000
T (08) 8204 2004
Country areas 1800 623 445

5 June 2019

Keep the home fires burning – responsibly

Today marks World Environment Day, and this year's theme of air pollution is particularly relevant as many of us begin to fire up our wood heaters to chase away the winter chill.

EPA Program Manager, Legislation and Policy, Steven Mudge, said while a fire was comforting on a cold night, it was important to remember that smoke from home fireplaces could be a cause of health problems or even neighbourhood conflict.

“Many people think of wood smoke as somehow being ‘good’ smoke because we associate it with happy camping trips or cosy nights in front of the fireplace,” he said.

“The truth is that if you can smell smoke, no matter where it's coming from, it is potentially doing you harm.

“Smoke is a major cause of poor air quality in winter, especially in built-up areas, or regions like the Adelaide Hills and South East where temperatures are lower and many homes have wood-burning heaters.

“Exposure to smoke can cause considerable health impacts for elderly people, young children, or anyone with a respiratory disease.”

Mr Mudge said people could still enjoy fires during winter if they kept in mind a few guidelines.

“Getting your chimney cleaned once a year is important to remove creosote build-up, and if you own an investment property with a wood heater, don't forget about your tenants,” he said.

“Only use well-seasoned, dry wood, and never burn treated or painted wood as this can release additional harmful chemicals into the air.

“Your chimney should only smoke for about the first 20 minutes after starting the fire, and you should not choke your fire down overnight, allowing it to smoulder, as this creates unnecessary smoke.”

Bonfires and wood-burning fire pits are not allowed inside townships, but if you have a fire pit or chiminea for outdoor heating, you can still use charcoal as a fuel source.

Outdoor wood fires for cooking food are allowed so long as the size of the fire is proportionate to the food being prepared, such as a wood-fired pizza oven or BBQ.

For more information on enjoying a fire without annoying your neighbours, contact your local council or visit www.epa.sa.gov.au/woodsmoke