

# AIR POLLUTION FROM DOMESTIC PREMISES

The *Environment Protection Act 1997* (the Act) aims to ensure that air quality in the ACT meets national standards and minimises environmental harm from local emissions of air pollutants, while still permitting necessary or socially acceptable activities to take place.

The Act places a responsibility of care for the local environment on ACT residents.

## HOW DOES THIS AFFECT ME?

As an ACT resident, you have a general environmental duty to take all practicable and reasonable steps to prevent or minimise environmental harm or environmental nuisance from activities you conduct.

## IT IS ILLEGAL TO BURN CERTAIN SUBSTANCES

The burning of the following substances is prohibited under the Environment Protection Regulation 2005:

- synthetic plastics or other synthetic polymers
- wood that is painted, chemically treated or contaminated with chemicals
- chemicals other than those recommended by the manufacturer as a fuel
- unseasoned wood. Wood which is burnt as a fuel should be properly seasoned (less than 20% moisture content) to minimise smoke emissions.

## OPEN AIR FIRES

Under the Environment Protection Regulation 2005, the burning of garden or other waste in urban areas is banned. Fines can be imposed for breaches of the Act. Garden waste can be mulched at home or taken to garden waste recyclers at Belconnen or Mugga Lane free of charge or to Mitchell for a small fee.



Other types of fires are permitted for purposes which are generally acceptable to the broad community. These are:

- fires for cooking food (barbecues) or heating drinks
- fires for heating if the fire is in a fireplace or container that will contain the fire
- certain bonfires - on a residential lease such a fire is only permitted during the period commencing on the weekend before and ending on the weekend following the Queen's birthday public holiday. Ensure you notify your local fire brigade.

## INDOOR FIRES

Indoor fires including slow combustion stoves must be managed to minimise smoke emissions. You can minimise environmental harm and smoke emissions by taking the following simple steps:

- Ensure you use dry, seasoned untreated wood.
- Store wood in a well ventilated, covered space.
- When starting your fire always have the air control fully open and use sufficient kindling to get a good hot fire started quickly.
- Place logs in the firebox with about 2 cm between them to allow air flow.
- Use smaller logs. They will make a fire easier to light, establishing a vigorous fire quickly after refuelling.
- Before reloading your heater, fully open the air control for about five minutes.
- After reloading, keep the air control open for at least 20 minutes to ignite the fresh load quickly and get it burning well.
- Do not overfill the heater—use two or three small logs in the heater, never one large log.
- Keep your heater and flue in good working order, inspect both annually.
- Where possible don't use your wood heater overnight. A fire on a low setting causes excessive smoke pollution and won't heat your house.

- For more information on indoor fires refer to the [Your guide to using a wood heater information sheet](#).

## SPRAY PAINTING/HOBBIES

If you undertake an activity that may generate dust, chemical spray or fumes you are required to meet your general environmental duty by not allowing the dust, spray or fumes to harm your neighbour or the environment.

Do not:

- use spray paint in a manner which causes the paint spray to drift onto a neighbour's property or public land
- use organic solvents resulting in significant vapour emissions onto a neighbour's property or public land.

Large spray painting jobs should be conducted in properly constructed spray booths.



## MOTOR VEHICLES

Do not:

- warm up a motor vehicle on residential premiss for longer than five minutes (unless the manufacturer stipulates a longer period)
- warm up a motor vehicle in a position where excessive exhaust fumes enter a neighbour's house.

## LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Air emissions are regulated under Part 2 of the Environment Protection Regulation 2005. Various fines and penalties may apply. Odour, dust and fumes may also be considered an Environmental Nuisance under Section 141 of the *Environment Protection Act 1997* for which penalties apply. If an air pollution incident occurs and is validated, a warning letter or fine may be issued or, depending on the circumstances, an Environment Protection Order (EPO) may be issued. A breach of and EPO is a serious offence and could lead to prosecution in court.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about air pollution:

- call the Environment Protection Authority on 13 22 81
- visit [www.act.gov.au/accesscbr](http://www.act.gov.au/accesscbr)
- refer to:
  - [Burn Right Tonight](#)
  - [Your guide to using a wood heater information sheet](#)
  - [Prevent pollution from painting information sheet](#)
  - [Dust suppression during construction information sheet](#)

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Further Information | Phone: Access Canberra on 13 22 81 | Email: [environment.protection@act.gov.au](mailto:environment.protection@act.gov.au) | Web: [www.act.gov.au/accesscbr](http://www.act.gov.au/accesscbr)

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