

GARDEN BONFIRES: THE RULES

Sandwell Council's guide for garden bonfires



The rules



Reporting a bonfire to the Council



Statutory nuisance laws



What if I still want to light my bonfire?

The rules



Bonfires are not illegal, but they can result in legal action if the smoke is causing a nuisance to someone else. You can also be fined if the smoke from your bonfire drifts across a road and affects traffic. Bonfire smoke releases air pollution, which can worsen illnesses like asthma or lung cancer.

Burning household waste, like furniture or rubbish, is not allowed. Please recycle, or take bulky items to the local tip. The Sandwell Council Refuse Centre, located at Shidas Lane in Oldbury, allows you to book a slot on the [Sandwell tip website](#).

Reporting a bonfire to the Council



The first thing to do if bonfire smoke is bothering you is to speak to the owner of the bonfire. A direct approach may be a bit embarrassing, but if you can explain the problem it is causing they may be more considerate in the future. If this approach does not work, a complaint can be made to the Council, via the [MySandwell website](#).

When you make a complaint, you will be provided with an evidence monitoring form, which you must fill in every time a bonfire occurs. This forms the evidence for a potential statutory nuisance legal case. A warning letter can also be sent to the accused property, informing them a complaint has been made, the rules around garden bonfires and the potential legal action they may face.

The majority of bonfires stop after receipt of this letter.

Please note that the Council is not able to deal with one-off bonfires.

Statutory nuisance laws



The Council investigates bonfire complaints that could be a Statutory Nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. If smoke regularly interferes with someone's enjoyment of their property, an Abatement Notice can be served requiring the fire to be put out and to prevent the reoccurrence of the Nuisance.

Failure to comply with the Abatement Notice would be an offence on summary conviction with maximum fines of £5,000 for domestic premises.

What if I still want to light my bonfire?



If you still wish to have a bonfire, we recommend the following tips to minimise the chances of causing a nuisance for someone else:

Use dry material only, or smokeless fuels.

Avoid burning at weekends and bank holidays.

Don't burn household waste, like tyres, cables, plastic, rubber, furniture etc.

Don't leave a fire unattended, even when it is just smouldering.

Warn your neighbours that you are going to have a bonfire, and check no one nearby has washing hanging outside.

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