

October 2022 Newsletter

AIR POLLUTION THEME OF THE MONTH: BONFIRES & FIREWORKS



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Air Quality Conference - Saturday 19th November 10-12pm

We are holding our first Faith Centres for Clean Air Conference on Saturday 19th November at the Balaji Temple in Oldbury. We are asking all faith leaders that have been taking part in the project to come along and would also encourage leaders to invite interested members of their congregations to attend too.



The conference will be a fantastic opportunity for us to get together and to hear more about the experiences of each of the faith centres who have taken part this year. This conference will help us to plan our support for the current and future centres over the next year. We will also be sharing information about other activities and opportunities that are on offer in Sandwell that support our ambitions to create cleaner air in Sandwell. We really hope to see you there, especially as we want to thank you all for your ongoing support both in raising awareness and taking that extra step to make a difference to air quality in Sandwell.

To help with catering, it would be helpful to know if you are planning to attend and if possible an idea of how many members of your congregation may also be attending, please email me to let me know at elizabeth.stephens@sandwell.gov.uk by **Friday 11th November 2022.**

Thank you 😊.

What are the rules around garden bonfires?

With Bonfire Night rapidly approaching, now is the time to start considering discussing safe and healthy bonfires. The rules around garden bonfires are shrouded in confusion and urban myths about only being able to burn after a certain time, but what are the actual rules?

Firstly, you are not allowed to burn domestic waste, it should be recycled. However, there are no laws against burning garden waste on bonfires. To both improve health and safety, and to reduce the impact on air pollution, consider attending a regulated bonfire event for Bonfire Night instead of having your own in your garden.

Garden bonfires commonly asked questions

Have you ever wondered what happens if you make a complaint to the Council about bonfires? Or what the laws around bonfires are?

Q: What are the laws around bonfires?

A: There are no laws banning bonfires, and the Council has no power over irregular or one-off fires. There is however the legal principle of creating a “Statutory nuisance”, which is included in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. If smoke from bonfires creates either an unreasonable or substantial interference with the use or enjoyment of a home or other premises or it is considered to be injurious to health or be likely to be injurious to health, then this smoke can constitute a statutory nuisance.

It is still illegal, however, to burn waste that has not come from your property, so trade or business waste cannot be burned at home.



Q: What action do the Council take if smoke is creating a “statutory nuisance”?

A: If sufficient evidence is provided that a statutory nuisance exists, or is likely to occur or recur, in its area, then an abatement notice can be served. The notice is served on the person responsible and requires them to stop creating the nuisance and/or prohibit its occurrence or reoccurrence.

Q: What air pollution do bonfires cause?

A: Bonfires emit high levels of particulate matter and smoke. Burning plastics, rubber or painted material creates noxious fumes that have poisonous compounds. The smoke and particles can have a damaging effect on people’s health.

Q: How do I report a bonfire nuisance?

A: The first thing to do is to talk to your neighbour, as you may be able to resolve the problem first. An informal approach is usually preferable, as involving the council can sometimes damage relations to your neighbours. If the situation still is not resolved after this, you can report a bonfire on Sandwell Council’s website.

What can you do to help stop air pollution from bonfires?

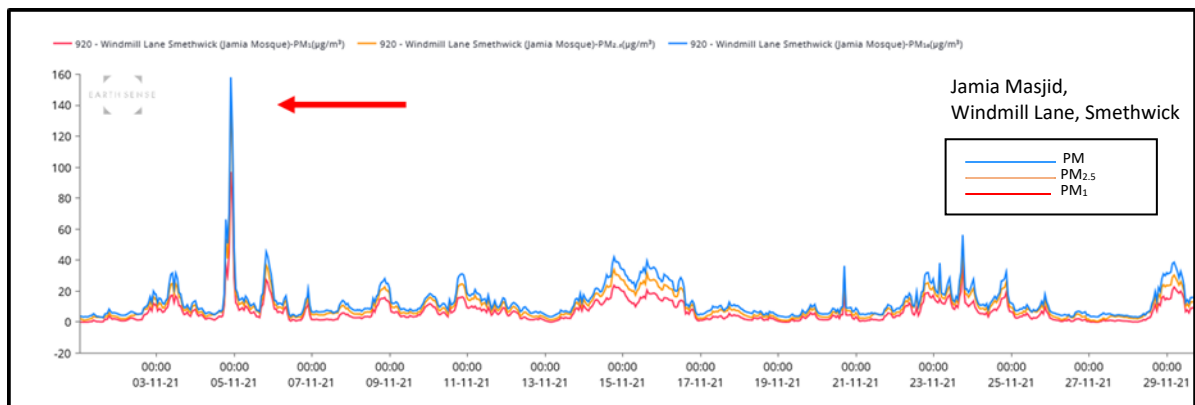
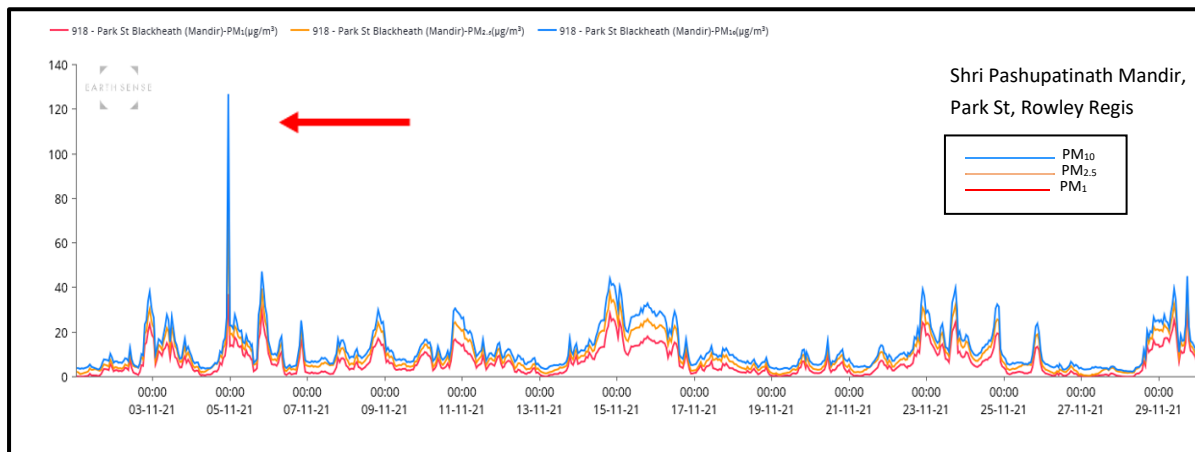
- Educate and spread the word to friends, family and neighbours
- Avoid having bonfires
- If you still plan to have a bonfire, only burn dry materials, and let your neighbours know first
- If you want more information or to share information with people others about bonfires then a leaflet is available to read and/or download from Sandwell Council’s Website at: https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/32059/bonfire_rules

Air Pollution and Fireworks

Fireworks release very fine dust particles (Particulate Matter) that are high in toxic metals. These can be breathed in and make pre-existing lung conditions worse. This, combined with the smoke from bonfires, can also make symptoms of heart conditions worse. Events like Diwali and Guy Fawkes Night can produce a lot of these pollutants and cause local concentrations to reach very high levels. Studies have found that particulate matter levels can be up to eight times higher than normal in the hours after a firework show.

You may remember last year that we shared the air quality results from a couple of our faith centres where we could see a huge peak in PM_{2.5} during Bonfire Night (5/11/2021) as shown below next to the red arrow. Check out your centre’s air quality screens around bonfire night and you should see the impact that fireworks and bonfires are having on local air quality.

Faith Centre Zephyr Air Quality Data – November 2021



Although these extremely elevated levels are normally only seen for one or two nights a year, it demonstrates the impact of domestic burning on our air quality. It also supports the argument as to why solid fuel burning stoves such as wood burning stoves and open fireplaces should be avoided for heating our homes. When it comes to reducing local air pollution we need to protect everyone's health and the environment by using cleaner fuels such as gas and electricity.

If you have any questions about the content of this newsletter, please contact a member of the Air Quality team via pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk.