

Maintain your stove and flue

Soot and tar build up inside a chimney flue makes it inefficient, increases the risk of fires and the potential for carbon monoxide poisoning. Follow these simple rules to minimise these risks:

- ensure that installation and servicing is carried out by a properly trained and registered competent person
- always operate your stove according to the manufacturer's guidance
- get your flue swept regularly (at least once a year)
- avoid slumbering your stove overnight
- install a carbon monoxide monitor.

If burning wood remember:

- wood can only be burned in a Defra 'exempt appliance' that is stated by the manufacturer as being suitable
- don't burn treated wood as it is likely to release toxic chemicals
- ensure that the wood you buy has the 'Ready to Burn' logo on or is well seasoned (normally for 2 years) with a moisture content below 20%.

Check the moisture content of your wood is less than 20% by using a moisture meter. Burning wet wood creates smoke and harmful pollution, but also damages your stove and chimney.



What happens if I break the rules?

If you do not follow the rules in a Smoke Control Area and **visible smoke** is seen being emitted from your chimney (section 19A of the Clean Air Act 1993) you could face a penalty of up to **£300**.

You can also be fined up to **£1,000** by a magistrates' court if you acquire or sell 'controlled' (unauthorised) solid fuels.

Do you really need to burn?

Wood-burning stoves are often sold with the belief that they will help create a cosy atmosphere, and are a cheaper and more eco-friendly way to heat your home. But the facts are that using wood as fuel to heat your home actually:

- **harms your wallet**, as wood burning is almost always more expensive than all other forms of heating
- **harms your health**, lighting fires in our homes is actually the largest source of harmful fine particulate matter (PM2.5) air pollution in the UK, even more than that from vehicle traffic.
- **harms the planet**, as wood burning creates more harmful CO² emissions per energy unit than oil or gas and we cannot reproduce trees fast enough to offset the CO² emitted by burning wood.

For these reasons it's better to use electric or gas than solid fuels to heat your home.

Financial help and support

If you are struggling financially to heat your home or need advice on benefits that you may be entitled to, the following organisations offer free, impartial and non-judgemental advice:

- **Citizens Advice**, Sandwell & Walsall 0808 278 7812, www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- **Civil Legal Advice**, 0345 345 4345, www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice
- **StepChange Debt Charity**, Freephone 0800 138 1111, www.stepchange.org
- **National Debtline**, Freephone 0808 808 4000, www.nationaldebtline.org

More information

- **Sandwell Council's Air Quality Webpages:** www.sandwell.gov.uk/consumer-advice/air-quality
- **HETAS** -advice on the safe use of solid fuels www.hetas.co.uk/
- **Contact us by email at Sandwell Council:** pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk

CLEANER AIR FOR ALL IN SANDWELL

Information for Sandwell residents about living in a Smoke Control Area and how to comply with the rules



Why has Sandwell introduced a Smoke Control Area?

Over the past 20 years the use of solid fuels, particularly in wood burning stoves has seen a big rise in popularity but their increased use now poses a significant threat to our health and environment. A Smoke Control Area has been introduced in Sandwell to prevent the use of the most polluting smoky fuels.

Impact on our health and the environment

Smoke from wood burning contains almost the same harmful chemicals and toxic particles as those found in cigarette smoke. But, while a single lit cigarette emits a small amount of harmful air pollutants, one wood burning stove releases huge amounts of air pollutants, harming the health of many people.



Breathing in toxic air pollution particles significantly increases the risk of developing pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung cancer, heart disease and stroke.

Children and young people are especially vulnerable, as fine particulate matter (PM2.5) can cause and make many health conditions such as asthma, worse. It can also permanently stunt children's lung growth and their brain development.



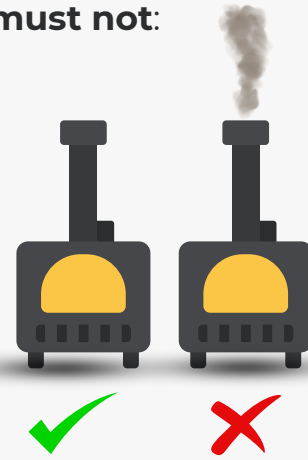
Local wildlife is also affected by air pollution as it makes soils more acidic. As a result some plants and fungi struggle to survive, which in turn reduces the food sources and habitats for insects, fish, mammals and birds that they support.



What are the rules in Sandwell's Smoke Control Area?

The Borough of Sandwell Smoke Control Area is a legally designated area where you **must not**:

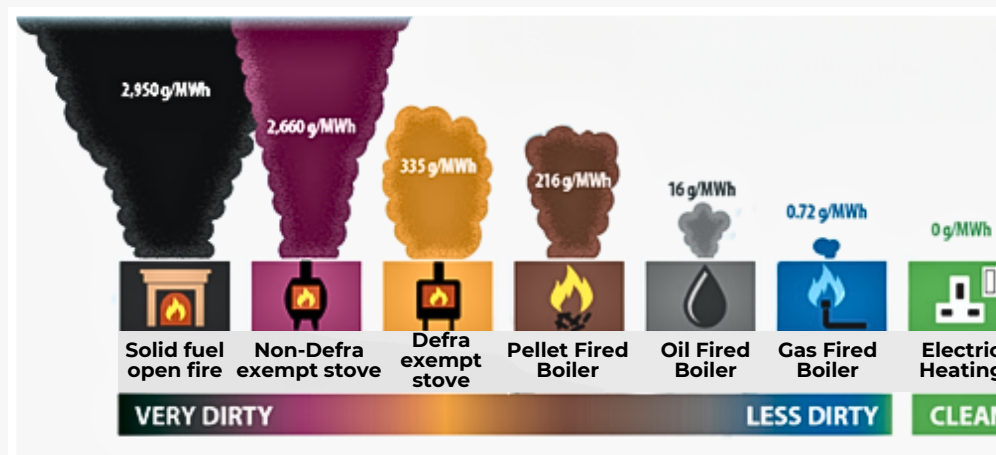
- emit visible smoke from a chimney, including a chimney on a moored vessel such as canal boat or narrow boat **or**
- burn solid fuel, such as wood and coal, that is not authorised (controlled fuel) unless it is used in a Defra 'exempt appliance'.



Can you burn wood in any appliance?

No, only Defra exempt appliances, approved for burning wood can be used. These appliances include EcoDesign and ClearSkies certified stoves which are designed to achieve low smoke emissions. Well seasoned or dried wood that has a moisture content of 20% or less must be used. Never burn treated wood such as pallets and fence panels. You can check to see if a stove is on the Defra exempt appliance list at www.smokecontrol.defra.gov.uk/appliances.php

A comparison of fine particulate (PM2.5) emissions from different home heating methods



Burning wood and solid fuels releases harmful pollutants, even without visible smoke.

If in doubt use 'authorised fuels'

If you don't know whether your stove is an 'exempt appliance', then always use manufactured solid fuels (MSF). Examples of MSF authorised fuels include a wide variety of "firelogs" (made from compressed sawdust and other timber waste, and briquettes made from compressed coke, coal or anthracite). Defra's list of authorised fuels can be found at www.smokecontrol.defra.gov.uk.

Can I use 'Ready to Burn' fuels?

Wood sold in nets or bags and displaying the 'Ready to Burn' logo, can only be burned in Defra 'exempt appliances' in Sandwell. The wood must also be kept dry to ensure it maintains a moisture content of less than 20%.



Manufactured Solid Fuels (MSF) with the 'Ready to Burn' logo are certified authorised fuels so they can be burned in Sandwell. But the fuel must still be stored in a dry place to keep moisture levels below 20%.



Installing a solid fuel stove

Sandwell is a Smoke Control Area so only **Defra 'exempt appliances'** can be installed. When solid fuel stoves are fitted by a HETAS installer, a certificate of compliance will be issued, and a copy will be sent to Sandwell Council's Building Consultancy department. The certificate must be retained for future owners of the property. If you want to install a stove yourself or hire a non-HETAS-registered installer, you are legally required to inform Sandwell Council's Building Consultancy department **before** starting the installation. When the work is complete, they will need to inspect the work to ensure building regulations have been met.