



## Environmental Health Information Sheet: Chimney Smoke

### Introduction

Wood burners and open fires are a popular form of domestic heating during the winter months in Ashburton and when operating correctly can be an efficient and economical heat source. However, chimneys that are producing a lot of smoke are a sign that the wood burner or fire is not being used correctly, is losing energy and heat and causing air pollution.

### Smoke pollution

If there is excessive smoke in the air from domestic fires that is considered air pollution. Small particles in the air can be dangerous and toxic and can cause harm to your health. Smoke affects people in different ways depending on their age, current state of health and their exposure levels. The most vulnerable people are the elderly, babies, young children and those with existing respiratory conditions such as asthma.

### Smoke as a health nuisance

Under the Health Act smoke is deemed to be a nuisance where any chimney of a dwelling sends out smoke in such quantity, or of such nature, or in such a manner, as to be offensive or likely to be injurious to health. This is prosecutable and there are legal penalties for causing an offence.

### Stopping the smoke

So what can you do to prevent your wood burner or fire from creating air pollution and causing a health nuisance? Try these simple steps;

- Store woodpiles undercover so they don't become damp
- Never burn green, wet or chemically treated wood
- Start your fire with paper and dry kindling
- Clean your chimney every year
- Keep your fire burning brightly

### Check your chimney

Check your chimney using this picture (*source: Department of Environment and Conservation Western Australia*) to help you gauge how well your fire is burning. Remember a fire using dry fire wood that is burning brightly will save you money, produce more heat and is better for the environment.



Further Information is available at:

<http://www.ecan.govt.nz/Our+Environment/Air/>