

## Operating a heater or fireplace efficiently

The amount of smoke a fire makes depends on how much oxygen is available, how hot the fire is, how green (or seasoned) the wood is and whether you have just started the fire or whether it is established.

### A good fire needs good wood

- burn dry, seasoned, untreated wood
- stack wood under cover in a dry, ventilated area

### When starting the fire

- use small, dry kindling to get the fire going quickly
- use smaller logs instead of large logs
- place a sheet of newspaper above your unlit fire to create a good updraft
- burn on high air-flow for 30 minutes after lighting

### When the fire is burning well

- place the wood end-on into the firebox rather than sideways
- leave a minimum 2 cm gap between pieces of wood
- reload regularly to ensure rapid ignition of the new fuel, but do not overfill the heater
- burn on high air-flow for 20-25 minutes after adding wood to the fire
- keep the fire burning brightly so it doesn't smoulder

# Smoke Regulations & Wood Heating

## Frequently Asked Questions

## Regulations on smoke emissions from wood-burning heaters, fireplaces & cooking appliances used for heating

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EPA Tasmania is the Division of DPIPW/E that supports Tasmania's independent statutory environmental regulator, the Environment Protection Authority.



## Why does smoke from wood heaters and fireplaces need to be regulated?

Smoke from wood heaters and various types of fireplaces can contribute to high levels of fine, airborne particles. Higher concentrations of these particles are known to increase the incidence of heart and lung diseases in the community. Wood smoke can also be an environmental nuisance for neighbours.

## Where can I get a copy of the Smoke Regulations?

The *Environmental Management and Pollution Control (Smoke) Regulations 2019* can be downloaded from <https://legislation.tas.gov.au> and should be read in conjunction with this pamphlet.

More details are also available in the 'Rules for Wood-Fired Heating and Cooking' Factsheet, which can be downloaded from <https://epa.tas.gov.au/epa/news/new-regulations-for-managing-domestic-smoke-sources>

Part 3 of the Regulations contains smoke emission rules for wood heaters, fireplaces and outdoor solid-fuel-burning heaters such as fire pits and fire pots. Part 3 also provides rules for outdoor solid-fuel-burning cooking appliances (e.g. BBQs and pizza ovens) that **aren't** being used for cooking or smoking food, or heating water. The rules in Part 3 apply to heaters and cookers used in homes, backyards, hotels, clubs and retail premises.

## How can I tell if my wood heater or fireplace is operating within the Regulations?

A well-maintained heater or fireplace should produce little visible smoke when a fire is burning well. The

Regulations are breached if a smoke-plume is visible from its source at a distance of 10 metres or more for at least 30 seconds. The smoke must also be generally visible for ten minutes.

## Check your wood heater or fireplace for smoke visibility:

Has smoke been coming from the source for the last 10 minutes? **NO** → Operating within regulations.

**YES** ↓

Is smoke visible at least 10 metres from the source? **NO** → Operating within regulations.

**YES** ↓

Is smoke visible at this distance for more than 30 seconds at a time? **NO** → Operating within regulations.

**YES** ↓

The regulations have been breached. Adjust your fire for better burning.

## Will the community be patrolled, and fines issued for smoky wood heaters?

Under the Regulations council officers may issue warnings and infringement notices. Education and informal warnings are usually the first step.

Formal action is normally only taken if people persist in operating their wood heater or fireplace in a way that causes excessive smoke. Individual councils decide how to enforce the regulations. Councils might conduct

patrols in areas where a particular problem with air quality has been identified.

## How much will I be fined if smoke from my wood heater or fireplace contravenes the regulations?

A council officer may issue you with an infringement notice (on-the-spot-fine) of 2 penalty units, or \$344\*. If the matter is taken to court, the maximum penalty for visible smoke emissions is 10 penalty units or \$1,720\*. Court action is normally only taken if other approaches have failed.

## How do I know if the wood heater I buy complies with the regulations?

Under the Regulations all heaters made or sold in Tasmania, or imported into the State, must comply with the current Australian Standards for heater emissions and efficiency. This also applies to second-hand units sold in Tasmania.

If you are buying a wood heater, make sure it has a compliance plate showing that it meets Australian Standards AS/NZS 4012-2014 and AS/NZS 4013-2014. The modification of wood heaters in any way that may increase smoke emissions is prohibited (see Part 2 of the Regulations).

## What types of fuel may be burnt?

In general, you should only use clean, dry timber. The burning of treated or painted wood, plastics, rubber and household rubbish is prohibited (for more information, see the definition of 'prohibited waste' in Part 1 of the Regulations - Interpretation).

\*2020/2021 values - Penalties are subject to indexation