

## Reduce smoke from your wood heater

### Don't burn rubbish or painted or treated wood.

Never burn household rubbish, driftwood or painted wood. Most old painted wood is likely to contain lead-based paint, and when burnt can produce poisonous gases.

### Check your wood is dry by tapping it with a coin.

Dry wood makes a sharp resonant sound; wet wood makes a dull sound. Freshly cut wood needs to be stored under cover in a dry, ventilated area for eight to 12 months before use. Green or unseasoned wood contains up to 70% water, which causes smoke, not heat and costs you money.

### Make sure your fire has enough air.

Open the air controls fully for five minutes before and 15 to 20 minutes after loading the heater. Stack wood loosely in your firebox, so plenty of air circulates around it. That way your fire will burn hot and efficiently, rather than smoulder, which causes smoke and air pollution.

### Don't let your fire smoulder overnight.

In winter, the highest concentrations of fine particles in the air occur after midnight caused by smouldering heaters overnight.

### Get your flue checked and cleaned at least once a year by a professional.

Creosote can build up in the flue, resulting in inefficient burning and increasing the risk of a chimney fire.

## Save money by making sure your home retains the heat you put into it

Before installing a new heating system, you need to ensure your home retains the heat you put into it. Put together a heating package including:

- Insulating ceilings, walls and floors where possible
- Sealing off draughts
- Effective window coverings
- Zoning living and sleeping areas
- Choose an appropriate heating system for your home and use it wisely and efficiently.

For more information visit [epa.nsw.gov.au/woodsmoke](http://epa.nsw.gov.au/woodsmoke)

NSW Environment Protection Authority  
4 Parramatta Square,  
12 Darcy Street, Parramatta NSW 2150  
Locked Bag 5022 Parramatta NSW 2124

Report pollution and environmental incidents  
Environment Line: 131 555 (NSW only)  
or [info@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au)  
See also [www.epa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au)  
TTY users: phone 133 677 then ask for 131 555  
Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727  
then ask for 131 555

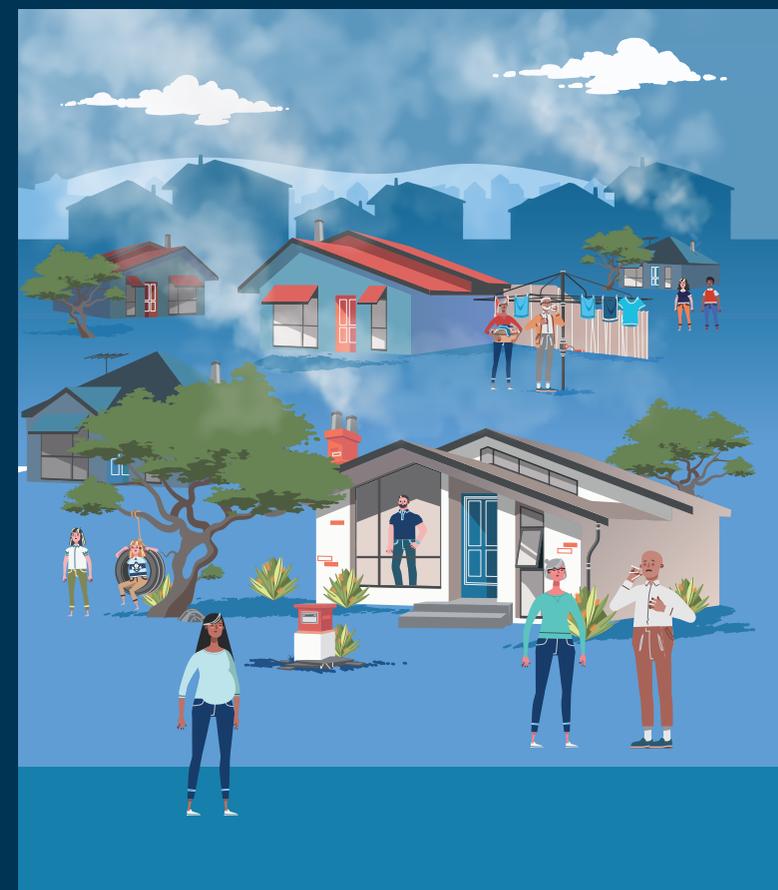
ISBN 978 1 922260 74 1

EPA 2019P1733

June 2022

Printed on recycled paper

# If you can smell it, you're already breathing it.



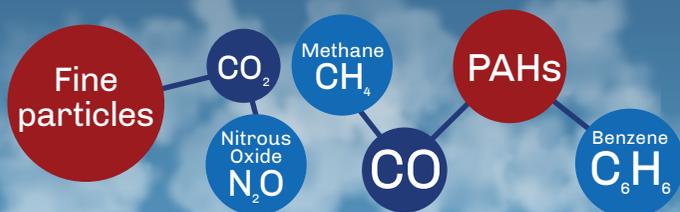
Wood smoke  
isn't good smoke.

[epa.nsw.gov.au/woodsmoke](http://epa.nsw.gov.au/woodsmoke)



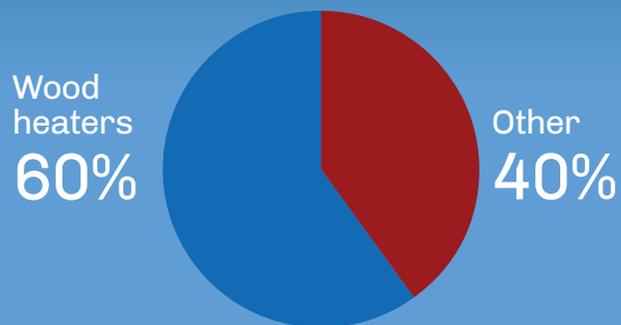
## What is wood smoke?

Wood smoke is produced from burning solid fuel in a wood heater or open fireplace. Wood is a natural material, but when it's burned, it produces harmful particle pollution and noxious gases, which go deep into the lungs.



## What's the problem?

Smoke from wood heaters is a major cause of air pollution. In many areas of NSW in winter wood smoke contributes more than 60% of fine particle pollution.



## Who is most affected?

Wood smoke pollution affects everyone. Even in small amounts, wood smoke pollutants can be harmful especially to the young, frail or elderly.

### What can you do to protect yourself?

- Avoid outdoor physical activities
- Stay indoors with windows and external doors closed
- If you suffer from heart or lung disease and you notice symptoms of smoke exposure, take your regular medications, rest and seek medical advice if symptoms persist.



## Wood smoke myth busters

### Myth

Wood smoke is natural so it must be OK.

### Busted!

If you can smell wood smoke, you're breathing it in and in winter it can hang around for days at a time, having severe impacts on health.

### Myth

Wood smoke rises, so it is not a problem.

### Busted!

On cold winter days (when people tend to burn wood) weather conditions create temperature inversions that put a lid over the lower atmosphere, trapping hazardous pollutants close to ground level.

### Myth

There are more important pollution sources to worry about.

### Busted!

There are other pollution sources, but wood burning occurs right in the neighbourhood where we live.

If you can **smell it**, you're already **breathing it**.