

# DOMESTIC SMOKE



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## Smoke Control Areas

Under the Clean Air Act 1993 local authorities can declare the whole or part of their district to be a Smoke Control Zone. This means that it is an offence to cause smoke from a chimney, and for any person or company to obtain or deliver unauthorised fuel to a building, unless the appliance in use is exempt. Ordinary bituminous coal and wood are not authorised fuels. Around 50% of households live in Smoke Control Areas, and those using solid fuel must therefore ensure that they use an authorised smokeless fuel and/or an exempt appliance.

There are open grate fires, glass fronted room heaters and boilers, which are tested and approved to burn specific authorised fuels and information on all these appliances and fuels can be obtained from [www.uksmokecontrolareas.co.uk](http://www.uksmokecontrolareas.co.uk)

Smoke Control Areas only restrict domestic burning, and do not cover bonfires or burning of waste.

If you are in doubt as to whether your property is in a Smoke Controlled Area, contact the Environmental Health Department of your Local Authority.

## Types of Solid Fuel

There are two types of solid fuel - minerals and biomass. Mineral fuels include bituminous coal, natural smokeless fuel (anthracite and dry steam coal), manufactured smokeless fuel and manufactured non-smokeless fuel. The main biomass fuels types are wood, manufactured logs (usually a mixture of wood and wax) and pellets. They are used in open fires, closed appliances (such as room heaters and wood burning stoves), cookers, and gravity fed boilers. It is important to ensure that you pick the most appropriate fuel for your appliance to ensure the highest possible efficiency.

Petroleum Coke is one fuel available, and its use in neat form is not recommended by the Solid Fuel Association or the manufacturer. The Government have issued guidelines for its use in blended form and these guidelines should always be followed. Petroleum Coke should only be used in blended form and under no circumstances should it be used neat on any type of appliance. It is also important that any blends should be authorised for use in Smoke Control Areas. If in doubt, ask your supplier for clear written instructions or contact the Solid Fuel Association.

## Solid Fuel Emissions

To reduce the amount of pollutants produced from burning solid fuel, make sure you maintain your appliance adequately and ensure fuel is clean and dry. Burning of wet fuel, such as unseasoned wood, will mean that the fuel will burn at a lower temperature and will result in higher levels of emissions, including dioxins, furans, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, particles, and nitrogen oxides. Burning contaminated fuel, such as painted or preserved wood, will also lead to higher emissions. Current estimates are that the use of solid fuels, bonfires, and waste burning, currently accounts for roughly a fifth of UK emissions of dioxins and furans to air, which are both air pollutants and have a negative impact on health (increasingly stringent legislation has reduced industrial emissions).

Accidental exposure to carbon monoxide (CO) kills more than 50 people each year in England and Wales. It is a colourless, odourless, poisonous gas produced by the incomplete combustion of carbon-based fuels. Incorrectly installed, poorly maintained or poorly ventilated cooking and heating devices are often the main sources. Carbon monoxide poisoning can kill quickly without warning, it can also resemble food poisoning, viral infections, flu or simple tiredness, e.g. headaches, tiredness, feeling sick and difficulty thinking clearly. If you suffer from these symptoms and they could be caused by carbon monoxide exposure, stop using ALL your cooking and heating appliances and seek urgent medical attention. Call a suitably qualified engineer to check your appliances.

## Preventing CO Poisoning

- Have all cooking and heating appliances installed and serviced regularly by trained, reputable, registered engineers e.g. CORGI (for gas appliances), HETAS (for coal fuelled appliances), OFTEC (for oil appliances) - DO NOT attempt to install or service the appliance yourself!
- DO NOT use poorly maintained appliances and make sure chimneys and flues are clean and not blocked.
- Make sure that all rooms are well ventilated when an appliance is being used.
- Fit a carbon monoxide alarm that meets European Standard EN 50291 and carries a British or European mark, such as a kite mark. You can be particularly at risk from CO poisoning when you are asleep, because you may not be aware of early symptoms until it is too late. Having an audible CO alarm could wake you and save your life.

## Maintaining Solid Fuel Appliances

The maintenance of solid fuel appliances is very important to ensure safe and efficient operation.

The following general guidelines are recommended but it is important to follow any instructions from your appliance manufacturer.

- Ensure that your chimney is swept from top to bottom at least once a year. If you are responsible for this work then you may find that a member of the National Association of Chimney Sweeps (NACS) will provide a professional service - contact details below.
- Air is vital, make sure you have enough ventilation to keep your fire burning properly.
- Flueways at the back of any boiler should be cleaned at least once a month.
- Throat plates at the top of any room heater should be removed and cleaned regularly.
- Check and empty the ashcan regularly and at least once every day. Do not let the ashcan overflow with ash.
- You should take immediate action if you smell or suspect fumes - open windows and doors immediately and let the fire go out. Do not relight the fire until you have had your chimney and appliance flueways checked by a qualified engineer. A list of HETAS Registered Engineers who specialise in dealing with solid fuel appliances is available from the Solid Fuel Association.

## Buying Solid Fuel



Look for this logo - The Approved Coal Merchants Scheme.

When purchasing solid fuel, the Solid Fuel Association recommends that you always buy from a coal merchant who is a member of the Approved Coal Merchants Scheme. These merchants are fully trained in their trade and are committed to serving the customer. This means that they have agreed to operate and abide by the Coal Trade Code.

## Your Approved Coal Merchant will:

- Supply a wide range of solid fuels ensuring you are able to enjoy the benefits of real fire heating.
- Give advice on the correct fuel for your appliance and general safety advice.
- Correctly describe, prepare and deliver your chosen fuel.
- Keep you advised of current prices and any special discounts or promotions available.
- Be insured against public and product liability risks.
- Investigate promptly and sympathetically any complaint on products or services

## Further Information

All information on solid fuel usage and appliances can be obtained from:

### **Solid Fuel Association**

Tel: 0845 601 4406

Email: [sfa@solidfuel.co.uk](mailto:sfa@solidfuel.co.uk)

[www.solidfuel.co.uk](http://www.solidfuel.co.uk)

Advice on solid fuel usage and appliances

### **National Association of Chimney Sweeps (NACS)**

Tel: 0800 833464

Email: [nacs@chimneyworks.co.uk](mailto:nacs@chimneyworks.co.uk)

[www.chimneyworks.co.uk](http://www.chimneyworks.co.uk)

List of NACS chimney sweeps

We would like to thank our East Midlands Division and the Solid Fuel Association for contributing to this leaflet.



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- Air Pollution
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