

CAMDEN COUNCIL

Media Release



26 June 2015

Check your Chimney and Reduce Winter Air Pollution

Camden residents are being asked to help improve winter air quality by making sure they are using wood heaters correctly and checking their chimneys for excessive smoke.

Mayor of Camden, Cr Lara Symkowiak said that there are important measures the community can take to help ensure the air quality in Camden remains as clean as possible.

“As temperatures drop and winter sets in, the incorrect use of wood fire heaters can seriously affect our air quality. Unfortunately, wood smoke pollution can harm the environment, impact community health and can be upsetting for neighbours.”

“Council is encouraging all residents with wood heaters to go outside and check their chimneys.”

“We can all help to reduce the amount of woodsmoke pollution this winter by using aged dry wood, running our heaters properly and cleaning your flue annually to help prevent a build-up of creosote.”

“Ideally, chimneys should not vent any smoke, just a heat haze. Older models may vent a thin wispy smoke. If your chimney has obvious smoke this means it’s not operating as efficiently as it could be, regardless of its age.” Cr Symkowiak said.

Wood smoke particles from inefficient heaters float in the air and can be seen as a smoke haze that can sometimes sit over built up areas and present a problem, especially for people suffering existing respiratory conditions, and for very young children and older residents.

Some simple steps residents can take to reduce wood smoke pollution include:

- Do not let your heater smoulder overnight – keep enough air in the fire to maintain a flame
- Burn only dry, aged hardwood in your wood heater. Green or unseasoned wood has lots of moisture, which causes a fire to smoke. Freshly cut or unseasoned wood needs to be aged for about 8 to 12 months.
- Store your wood under cover in a dry, ventilated area. Freshly cut wood needs to be stored for at least eight to twelve months.

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- Never burn rubbish, driftwood or painted or treated wood. These are sure to pollute the air and can produce poisonous gases
- When lighting a cold heater, use plenty of dry kindling to establish a good fire quickly
- Use several small logs rather than one large log and stack them loosely in your heater, so air can circulate around them. Don't cram the firebox full
- Keep the flame lively and bright. Your fire should only smoke when you first light it and when you add extra fuel. Open the air controls fully for 5 minutes before and 15 to 20 minutes after reloading the heater
- Check your chimney regularly to see how well your fire is burning. If there is smoke coming from the chimney, increase the air supply to your fire
- Have the chimney cleaned every year to prevent creosote build-up
- If you are buying a wood heater, make sure it has a compliance plate showing it meets the Australian Standard (AS/NZS 4013:1999).

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