

## Help improve air quality in your home this winter

East Suffolk residents are being reminded of the importance of only burning seasoned firewood at home this winter, to help reduce air pollution and improve their health.

Many homes in East Suffolk have open fires or wood-burning stoves however people may not be aware that these can contribute to air pollution and reduce indoor air quality, which can be damaging to health.

Long-term exposure to air pollution, over many years, reduces life expectancy, mainly due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, strokes and lung cancer. And even short-term exposure, over hours or days, can impact on lung function, worsening asthma, and increasing respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions.

Cllr James Mallinder, East Suffolk's cabinet member for the Environment said: "We know many residents use open fires or wood-burning stoves as their main source of heating and that others enjoy the ambience of having an open fire at home. However, making a few small changes can make a huge difference in terms of the efficiency of your fire and the effect on the air quality in your home. Improving air quality, both indoors and outside, will have a positive impact on the environment, your health and the health of your family."

To help reduce emissions, both indoors and into the environment, there are simple steps which homeowners can take:

- \* Consider burning less – many people use an open fire or wood-burning stove in addition to their normal heating. If your house is already warm, then consider not lighting the fire, which will reduce both costs and airborne particulates.
- \* Only burn dry (seasoned) wood - burning wet or unseasoned/green wood is inefficient as it takes a lot of heat to boil off the water before the appliance can give out heat into the room. In turn, this creates a lot of smoke, tar and particulates which can damage your chimney and appliance and contributes to air pollution.
- \* Buy 'Ready to Burn' fuel – look for wood marked as 'Ready to Burn' sold by a Woodsure Certified Supplier. Wood displaying the Ready to Burn logo has a 20% moisture content (or less) and can be burnt straight away. These logs burn more efficiently than unseasoned/green wood and reduce environmental impact. For more information on the Ready to Burn Scheme, see [www.readytoburn.org](http://www.readytoburn.org)
- \* Do not burn treated waste wood (e.g. old furniture or pallets) or household rubbish – wood which has been treated with paint or preservatives can emit harmful fumes, and household rubbish may include plastics that can release toxic pollutants, such as arsenic, into your home when burnt and may affect your health.
- \* Consider using an approved smokeless fuel – a list of approved smokeless fuels is available at [www.hetas.co.uk](http://www.hetas.co.uk)
- \* If you are buying a new stove - check it is Defra approved and have it installed by a qualified person.

- \* Check how to operate your appliance efficiently - always operate your stove in line with the manufacturer's guidance. By controlling the air supply correctly, you will improve efficiency, saving you money and reducing emissions.
- \* Regularly maintain and service your stove – servicing your stove annually means it will work better and will generate more heat from what you burn.
- \* Get your chimney swept regularly (up to twice a year) - during use, particulates build up in the chimney reducing the efficiency and increasing the risk of chimney fires. It is better to use a qualified chimney sweep who will also be able to advise you on good burning practices for your open fire or stove.
- \* Make sure you are using the correct fuel for your stove and flue – some stoves are specific to the type of fuel to be burnt. Some are wood only and others are multi-fuel. Burning the wrong fuel could damage your equipment or flue, which will not be covered by home insurance.