

February 2023 Newsletter

AIR POLLUTION THEME OF THE MONTH: WOOD BURNING STOVES



In this issue find out more about:

- > Wood burning stoves
- > Negative impacts from using wood burning stoves
- > How to protect yourself and your family from wood burning stove emissions
- > Sandwell's new Boroughwide Smoke Control Area

Wood Burning Stoves



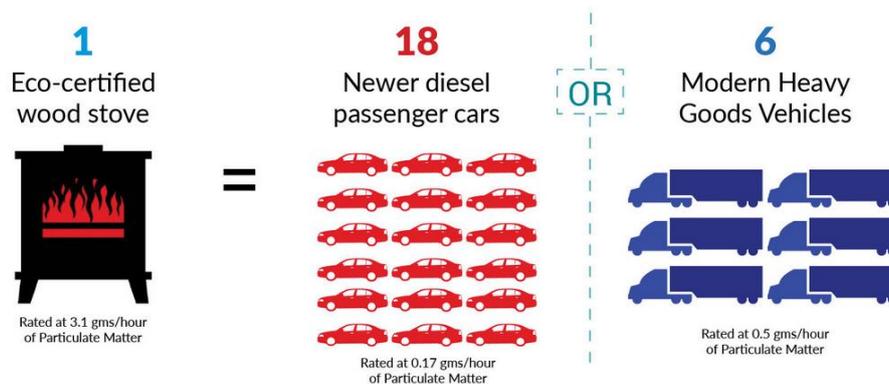
Wood burning stoves have grown in popularity in recent years. According to official government figures, harmful air pollution from wood burning in UK households has **more than doubled** in the last decade.

Approximately 50% of people's exposure to cancer-causing compounds is linked to wood burning stoves found in air pollution particles in metropolitan areas. Stoves also generate the most harmful pollutant to human health, PM_{2.5}. In addition to causing dangerously high levels of pollution in residential areas, wood burners triple the levels of toxic particulates inside the home. In more than

a third of local authorities in the UK, the amount of PM_{2.5} is above the World Health Organization standards.

Wood burning in towns and cities causes thousands of premature deaths each year, with up to 38,000 in England alone. Despite this, there are over **200,000** new wood burner installations per year, and there are around 1.5 million wood burners in UK homes. In urban areas like Sandwell, 25% of man-made particulate matter comes from household burning, whereas just 16% comes from industry and 13% comes from road transport, such as cars, vans, buses, and trucks.

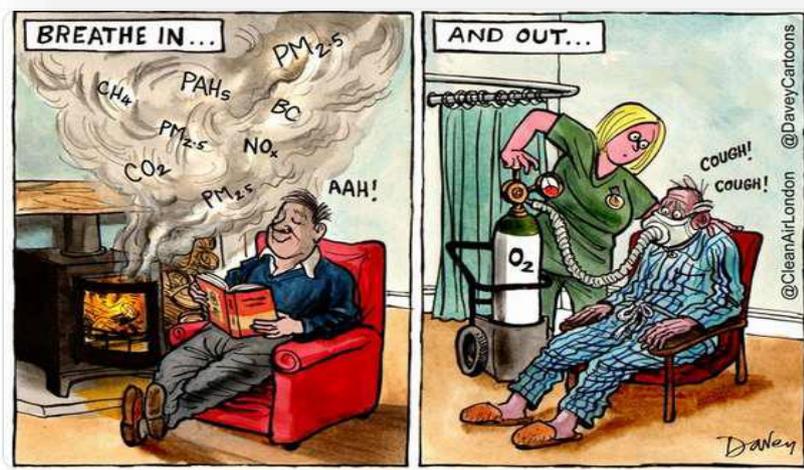
The answer to the question in the last image, as to whether a diesel truck or wood burning stove is more harmful?' can be found in the infographic below:



Data from: "Potential Air Quality Impacts from Biomass Combustion", Air Quality Expert Group (UK), 2017

Negative Impacts from Using Wood Burning Stoves

Emissions from a wood-burning stove may temporarily aggravate respiratory conditions resulting in coughs and shortness of breath. Those with asthma,



chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart failure, angina, and other conditions may also experience a worsening of their symptoms because of repeated exposure. Wood-burning stoves emit toxins that harm your lungs and increase your risk of developing lung and heart diseases, and even cancers.

The smoke from burning wood also contains cancer-causing substances (carcinogens) that are like those found in tobacco smoke. The stoves may be attractive and help create a cosy ambience, but the gases they emit, especially to young children who have developing lungs and smaller bodies, can be harmful for a long time or perhaps permanently.

The smoke from a wood-burning stove contains a variety of pollutants, mainly in the form of gases, particle pollutants, or creosote. Creosote is a foul-smelling residue that sticks to the inside of your chimney. It is produced when wood gases are not completely burned. The build-up can cause a chimney fire - another dangerous cost of a wood burning stove!

How to Protect Yourself and Your Family

We urge those who have access to alternative heating systems to refrain from using their wood stoves due to rising concerns about their effects on public health. Avoid purchasing a wood-burning stove or using an open fire if you have



alternative source to heat your home, and protect yourself and others around you, especially children who are particularly sensitive as their lungs are smaller and still developing. If you don't have access to another source of heat then think about using less-

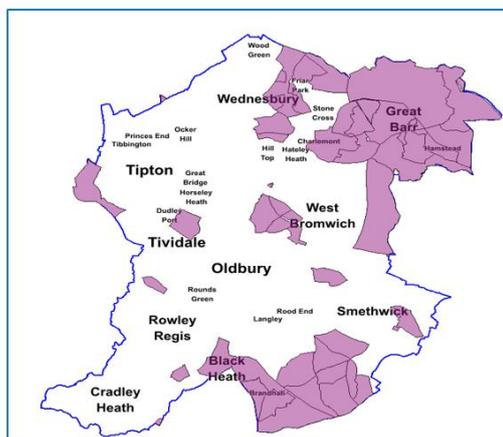
polluting fuels to heat your homes, a list of authorised fuels can be found here <https://smokecontrol.defra.gov.uk/fuels.php>.

All wood burning stoves should be professionally installed and should ensure that you follow the advised maintenance routine after that. You must also make sure that your house has enough ventilation and that all the required safety measures are in place to safeguard you and your family.

Smoke Control Areas

Smoke Control Areas (SCAs) are created by local authorities to help minimise the harmful health effects created by chimney smoke. If you live in a SCA only authorised fuels or exempt appliances can be used and anybody breaking the rules can be fined.

Existing Smoke Control Areas in Sandwell



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Borough-wide Smoke Control Area in Sandwell



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Since the 1970's Sandwell has had 52 separate smoke control areas which cover about 1/5th of the borough. In an effort to help improve local air quality Sandwell's Air Quality Team suggested that these should be removed and replaced with one, boroughwide Smoke Control Area. In May 2022 a six-week public consultation was held to see if residents and businesses thought that this was a good idea. The results found in favour of the proposal with 75% stating that air quality should be prioritised in Sandwell.

The results were presented to Council in November 2022 and in February 2023 the Council finally declared all of Sandwell to be a Smoke Control Area.

You can view a copy of the '**Borough Council of Sandwell Smoke Control Order 2022**' at <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/SmokeControlArea> and find out more about the rules surrounding Smoke Control Areas. The Order can also be viewed at Sandwell Council House in Oldbury, from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday and in libraries across Sandwell for a 6-week period from Monday 27th February until Tuesday 11th April 2023.

You can also download a copy of frequently asked questions on SCAs here https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/33002/faqs_smoke_control_area.