

Using a brazier or fire pit

Health Safety and Amenity Local Law 2021

Can I use a brazier or fire pit?

An above-ground brazier or fire pit may be used as long as their use does not cause a smoke impact to neighbours or fire safety risk to people or property.

If the use of a brazier or fire pit causes a smoke impact to neighbours or fire safety risk to people or property, Council or Queensland Fire and Emergency Services may direct that the fire be put out or otherwise managed to prevent the smoke impact or fire safety risk.

The following advice is provided about how you can reduce the risk of causing smoke impacts to neighbours or a fire safety risk to people or property.

How can I reduce the risk of smoke impacts to neighbours?

Use a smokeless fuel

If you live where the neighbouring houses or apartments are very close, fuels such as gas, ethanol and charcoal are great alternatives as they produce little to no smoke. Using smokeless fuel will reduce the smoke impact on neighbours and is also a good option if you have neighbours with health concerns who are sensitive to smoke or fumes.

Use the correct wood

- Do not burn garden vegetation, damp wood, toxic material, treated or painted wood or waste.

It is against the law to burn treated or painted timber, plastics, rubbish, rubber, paints, fabrics, petrol, oils, solvents, rags, or driftwood as they will release toxic chemicals that are dangerous to your family and neighbours.

- Only ever burn dry, well-seasoned wood. The dryness of firewood makes a significant difference to the amount of smoke emitted from a fire. Damp or green wood that has been freshly cut off the tree causes excessive smoke. Wood needs to be dried for upwards of 8 months.

- Commercially bought firewood may need further drying out at home. You can usually tell seasoned wood by looking at the ends of cut sections. Dried wood will have large cracks running across the grain. When you hit two pieces of dry wood together, there should be a loud, hollow cracking sound. A dull, muffled sound indicates that the wood is damp.
- Use split timber, without bark, not thicker than 15 centimetres. Split timber has a greater surface area that allows the wood to dry out and become seasoned more quickly.
- Softwoods are easier to ignite, burn faster and produce less coal. They are best used for starting the fire.
- Hardwoods are harder to ignite, burn slower and produce better coals. Hardwood can lead to higher smoke emissions on lighting or refuelling. Use hardwoods after achieving a good, hot fire with kindling and smaller wood pieces.
- Avoid burning highly scented woods (such as camphor) that could cause an odour.
- Burn only 100% untreated wood. Burning of CCA-treated wood releases arsenic into the air, your home and into the ash, which if inhaled, is dangerous. Any wood product with a coating such as melamine or formica, painted, stained or varnished wood, MDF, custom wood, chipboard or plywood which has glue and bindings, are also dangerous to burn.

Store your wood correctly

To avoid smoke, be sure to keep your firewood dry.

- Buy your wood well in advance, remove the packaging and store it correctly so it dries well.
- Store in an undercover area on pallets or raised on blocks, not on the ground or the wood will absorb moisture and increase the amount of smoke when burnt.



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- Split the wood into pieces of about 15cm in width before stacking.
- Stack the wood loosely, or in a crisscrossed manner, to allow air to circulate around the wood.
- Do not cover the wood heap with a tarp as this will trap moisture and prevent air circulation.
- You may wish to purchase a moisture meter to be confident of the dryness of your wood.

Lighting and maintaining the fire

Smoke comes from a fire that is not burning hot enough. Firstly, check if your brazier or fire pit will allow enough air to the fire. There should be holes around the sides and bottom of the container to draw air through the fire and help avoid smoke. Never use an old petrol drum or any other chemical container, as there may be chemical residue which will create toxic fumes.

- Build the fire using small kindling wood, loosely crumpled paper and/or firelighters.
- Create a pyramid of kindling in a way that allows air to circulate around the fire. You can expect some smoke when you first start, but it should not last longer than 20 minutes.

Never use petrol, oil or kerosene to help light the fire. This could cause an explosion.

- Once the fire has started, gradually increase the size of the wood you add. Start with soft woods and progress to hardwood when the fire is well established.
- Once a hot bed of coals has formed you can add larger pieces of dry, clean, seasoned wood.
- Do not smother the fire by adding logs that are too large, no more than about two to four kilograms.
- A good fire will be hot and aerated with coals and flames glowing brightly. Dark, smouldering wood and a lot of smoke are signs of poor and incomplete burning and insufficient air flow.

Check and monitor the amount and direction of smoke

You are responsible for ensuring that the smoke does not affect others in the community. Monitor the amount of smoke coming from your fire to ensure it is not causing a smoke impact.

- From time to time stand back and check if there is smoke from your fire and where your smoke is going.
- Wind, fog, trees and buildings will all affect where the smoke goes.
- Sometimes on winter evenings atmospheric conditions will trap smoke low to the ground over the whole neighbourhood.
- If you can see that this is happening, or if your smoke is going towards your neighbours' houses, please be courteous and put the fire out.

How can I reduce fire safety risk to people or property?

- Never leave your fire unattended. Actively supervise children around fires. For more information about keeping children safe around fires visit the Kidsafe Queensland website kidsafeqld.com.au

If anyone is burned, run the affected area under cool running water and call 000.

- Always put the fire out with water. Do not cover the fire or hot coals with sand or dirt.
- Do not let the fire burn overnight.
- Make sure the fire is at least 2.5m away from any flammable materials, including vegetation, fences and flooring. Do not place a fire pit or brazier under an overhang. Use an ashtray with portable fire pits and braziers.
- Do not light a fire during a fire ban. For information on fire safety and to see if a fire ban exists in your area visit the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services website at ruralfire.qld.gov.au

For more information, visit brisbane.qld.gov.au and search 'fire pit and brazier use', call Council on 3403 8888 or scan the QR code below.

