



bulkley valley - lakes district airshed management society

TIP SHEET

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healthy conversations

what to do about neighbours with smokey chimneys



Wood smoke can become a serious environmental nuisance for neighbours, affecting not only their health but also home comfort. The BVLD AMS encourages neighbours to resolve problems between themselves or through mediation. We all need to give greater consideration to the impacts we might be having on our neighbours. If your neighbour's chimney is releasing smoke or odour that is affecting the enjoyment of your property, you can do something about it.

tell your neighbour about the problem

You may find that your neighbour is unaware that their wood heater is affecting your property.

don't get angry Anger, frustration and fear can affect how we react to annoyance. By confronting the issue immediately you can avoid the risk of ill health caused by compounding stress. Less stress places you in a better frame of mind to constructively discuss your concerns with your neighbour. Most people are responsible and willing to help if asked.

approaching your neighbour Be calm not angry, focus your discussion on the issue, not the person. Help your neighbour to resolve the issue. Your neighbour may need help on how to reduce the amount of smoke from their wood heater. Check our website or pick up our brochure for tips on how to reduce wood smoke when using your woodburning appliance.

if you are approached Don't be defensive or offended. Remember—they are not there for a personal attack, it is 'the issue' that they are concerned about. Be friendly and work with your neighbour to find a solution.

mediation Sometimes both parties choose to seek assistance through free mediation – staff at the Ministry of Environment or the BVLD AMS may be able to help or can refer you to a professional mediator.

civil action If the parties have been unable to resolve the issue informally through negotiation or mediation, either party can take civil action by reporting the smoky chimney to your local municipal office. Burns Lake, Houston and Smithers have bylaws to reduce smoke from wood burning appliances. When seeking ways for neighbours to live in harmony, we advise that legal action should only be considered as a last option.