

# Tune Your Wood Heater

## ...for more heat and less smoke

### *Media Release*

Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) is encouraging everyone who owns a wood heater to tune it to produce less smoke and more heat this winter.

Wood smoke and calm weather conditions contribute to reduced air quality across parts of Melbourne and regional Victoria every winter.

EPA Chief Environmental Scientist Andrea Hinwood says there are simple ways to make your wood heater safer, cleaner and cheaper to run.

“Wood heaters and fireplaces continue to be a valued source of heating for many Victorians, particularly in regional Victoria,” Dr Hinwood said.

“However, wood heaters that are not maintained or operated correctly can produce a lot of smoke, and one of the best things you can do is have your flue or chimney professionally checked and cleaned,” she said.

“That can help to prevent flue fires and ensure the heater produces more heat and less smoke.

“Checking the wood heater’s operating manual can help you to get the best out of it, and give you the knowhow to choose the right fuel.”

Dr Hinwood said the best fuel is dry, seasoned, untreated hardwood, which burns longer and produces more heat and less smoke.

“Even slightly damp wood stops your wood heater from doing its best. You wind up paying for heat that is lost in drying out the timber before it can burn, and you get less efficient combustion that creates more smoke,” she said.

Dr Hinwood added that reducing wood fire smoke also helped to minimise any health impacts.

“Wood smoke contains very small particles and gases that contribute to air pollution. This can cause problems for anyone with cardiovascular, breathing difficulties and respiratory conditions, resulting in symptoms for some people.”

Dr Hinwood encouraged people to reduce their use of wood heaters and fireplaces on still days, and to go outside occasionally to check their chimney for smoke.

“Overall, Victoria’s air quality is very good. This is mainly due to initiatives introduced over the years that have reduced emissions from industry and motor vehicles. Another contributor to cleaner air has been the banning of backyard incinerators in residential areas,” she said.

“While the impact of a single wood heater may be small, the cumulative impact on air quality is significant, particularly through autumn and winter, and tuning your wood heater for most efficient operation is good for air quality, heating your home and people’s health.”

Dr Hinwood said other tips for reducing smoke pollution include:

Get a hot fire going quickly with plenty of paper and small kindling;

Keep the air controls set high enough to keep the fire burning brightly;

Never overload a wood heater with too much wood; and

Make sure you never leave the wood heater to smoulder overnight, as this starves the fire of oxygen, producing more smoke.

EPA also advises that you should never burn household rubbish, driftwood, treated wood such as pine, or old painted wood in your wood heater.

Dr Hinwood encouraged people considering a new heater to think about all the choices available to them, including other heating options that may produce less smoke than wood heaters.

*For more information on wood burning and the environment, please visit: <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/your->*