

## **Suggestions for problem residential wood smoke**

1. One thing that you must do is to set your mind to the fact that you must never give up, if you want to rid your life of the stench and danger of breathing wood smoke. There is no simple way to just wish it away, hoping that the burner will see what is happening and stop burning.
2. One of the first things that you should do is to make the burner aware that the smoke is coming onto your property and entering your house. Speak with them in a friendly and calm manner, but be sure to tell them that it is making your life miserable. I have heard of some burners who have stopped burning when approached this way. But, be prepared for just the opposite!
3. If there is a continuance of the burning after you have spoken to them, make a phone call to them, again in a calm manner, and repeat what you told them previously. If they still insist that they are going to burn, then tell them that you may have to resort to legal action for the protection of your health and property. This may work. But, again, be prepared for an angry display of words from them. Stay calm and do not get into a shouting match. Just insist that you will do what you have to do.

## **When Your Request is Refused**

So, you have discovered that nothing you have said to the burner has made any impact. Now what can you do?

1. Make an appointment with a good lawyer and have a letter sent to the burner, letting it be known that legal action will be taken if the burning does not stop. This effort will not cost you very much and is worth a try.
2. Begin to log all burning from the residence. Use dates, time of day, outdoor temperatures and wind direction.
3. Take note of the type of wood in the woodpile. Photograph any suspicious woods such as treated wood, plywood, etc.
4. Take a good look at the height of the chimney. If you think that it doesn't meet code, call the Building Department and have them go to check if it is of legal height. Even if the chimney height is legal, it really doesn't put a dent in pollution emissions, it just spreads them farther from the source.
5. Find out if any other neighbours are being affected by the smoke emissions, and in what ways they are affected. Keep notes of their names, addresses, phone numbers, comments etc.

6. Begin now, to take daily (or more often) photos of the smoke. Be sure your camera is set to display the date!
7. Speak with your town council members to see if you can enlist their help in solving the problem.
8. Call your nearest Environmental Protection Agency, Board of Health and as many local politicians that you can.
9. Make a phone call to the largest newspaper in your area and ask if they would come out and do a 'personal interest' story about the way your neighbor's wood burning habit has made such a damaging impact on your health and enjoyment of your own property.
10. Get a doctor's letter stating that the wood smoke has compromised your health.

### **Importance of Visual Evidence**



Photos and videos are extremely important, especially when you make the decision to file for a court order to put an end to the burning. You must make sure that the photos are dated, or they will not be accepted into evidence. Dated digital photos are actually 'legal documents' in the eyes of the court.

For example, in the photo above, it is dated and shows that the wood pile contains an assortment of wood, mouldings, treated wood and assorted junk.

This photo is an excellent example to show that the wood being burned may contain dangerous materials that should not be burned with the resulting release of toxics into the air.

Even so-called “clean wood” is exceedingly toxic to human health and the environment. For example, according to USEPA data, “wood smoke emits over 9,600% more lead than natural gas!” It also emits arsenic, formaldehyde, mercury and other toxicants at similarly high ratios compared to natural gas.

Visual evidence is often hard to find, such as smoke at night, or recreational burning behind walled yards, especially when many fires are burning collectively. But if you can smell wood smoke, you are ingesting its serious toxicants into your lungs. Remember that there is no safe level of wood smoke.

Most importantly, remember that you are the only one who can stop this wood burning. If you think, for one minute, that some magic will happen to end it, you are losing valuable time that could be spent taking charge of the situation and heading in the direction to put an end to it. Take my word for it. I wasted two years thinking that our town would not let this happen to a resident. Two years wasted!

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