

POLLUTION GUIDELINES



BONFIRES

**How to avoid
causing a nuisance
to your neighbour**

INTRODUCTION

It is important to consider your neighbours before lighting bonfires in your garden. They produce a large amount of air polluting smoke, which can obviously prove offensive to others if not properly controlled.



Garden Waste

Most nuisance complaints arise from the burning of garden waste. With the introduction of wheeled-bin collections, items such as grass cuttings, weeds and small branches may now be placed in the bins, so avoiding the need for a bonfire.

Larger items can be taken direct to your local disposal tips at Gas Road, Sittingbourne, Salters Lane, Faversham or Bridge Road, Sheerness.

Alternatively, composting is a better way of dealing with garden waste. Not only does it remove the problem, but it turns it into a useful soil conditioner. For a step by step advice leaflet ring Sittingbourne 417286.

Other Waste

As well as garden rubbish there are other waste materials which do not need to be burned. The Council advises householders to avoid bonfires for anything which could be put out with normal household rubbish.

Plastics, polystyrene, rubber and other synthetic materials can create a serious hazard if burned, producing thick black smoke and toxic fumes.

Bulky items, such as furniture, will be specially collected by the Council, often without charge, by telephoning Sittingbourne 417850.

BONFIRES CAUSING A NUISANCE

How to avoid causing a nuisance with a bonfire

A great deal of upset and bad neighbour disputes can be avoided if people think carefully before lighting bonfires. Here are some guidelines to follow to help prevent causing a nuisance:

- Avoid lighting up when the wind is strong or blowing directly towards houses, schools or other occupied buildings.
- Do not light a fire when neighbours have laundry out and give them notice so they can avoid putting out washing and close their windows.
- Do not light up just after a sunset as, contrary to popular belief, evenings are rarely a good time and atmospheric conditions often cause smoke to hang in the air for most of the night.
- Make sure everything to be burned is as dry as possible - because a hot quick fire creates the least smoke.
- Take sensible safety precautions and keep well away from buildings, fences and over hanging vegetation.
- Never leave a fire unattended and, when it has died down, douse it with water or soil so that it does not smoulder for several hours afterwards.
- Keep the number of bonfires to a minimum - often complaints are received because they become a regular occurrence.

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council has a duty to investigate complaints about bonfires that become a regular problem and cause a '**Statutory Nuisance**'.

If the Council is satisfied that a bonfire does amount to a Statutory Nuisance, or is likely to occur again and cause a Statutory Nuisance then the Council must serve a legal document called an Abatement Notice, on the person responsible for the nuisance. This enables the Council to take such action that it feels is appropriate to prevent the problem recurring.

Failure to comply with such a notice renders the person responsible liable for prosecution with fines up to £5,000 (£20,000 if on business or trade premises).

If you would like further information, please contact Swale Borough Council's Pollution Team at:

Environmental Services
SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL

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