

Bonfires



Bothered by smoke?

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ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਜ਼ਬਾਨ 'ਚ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ:

જો તમને પોતાની ભાષામાં ભાષાંતર જોઈએ છે, તો મહેરબਾની કરીને સંપર્ક સાધો:

Se necessitar de uma tradução, contacte por favor:

যদি আপনার নিজের ভাষায় অনুবাদ চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন:

اگر آپ کو ترجمہ اپنی زبان میں چاہئے تو برائے مہربانی رابطہ کریں۔



01483 750548

The word bonfire originated in medieval times when people celebrated happy occasions by burning animal bones.

Although bones are no longer burned, modern day bonfires still cause pollution and local nuisance. Bonfires may be fun for some but they are not the most environmentally friendly method of getting rid of your rubbish.

What's wrong with a good old-fashioned bonfire?

Every year Epsom & Ewell Borough Council receives many complaints from residents regarding smoke, smuts and smells from bonfires at neighbouring properties. Smoke can ruin your neighbours' enjoyment of their gardens, prevent them from opening their windows or hanging washing out, and reduce visibility in the neighbourhood and on roads.

Bonfires cause air pollution. Burning garden waste will produce smoke especially if it is damp and smouldering rather than dry and blazing. Like tobacco smoke, this will contain the poisonous gas carbon monoxide and other noxious or irritating compounds. Burning plastic, rubber or painted materials not only creates an unpleasant smell but also produces a range of harmful compounds.

Although these compounds can have damaging health effects, exposure to bonfire smoke is short-lived and serious harm is unlikely. However, problems may be caused for susceptible people such as children, asthmatics and bronchitis sufferers or those with heart problems. Remember, even if the immediate health risk is small, your bonfire will be adding to the general background level of air pollution. Air quality in the UK often hits the official 'poor' level – do you really want to make it worse?

Weather conditions, of course, can make matters worse. If the air is still, smoke will linger in the air. A dry, blazing bonfire will help to lift smoke and fumes upwards. Obviously in windy weather, smoke may blow into neighbouring properties and across roads causing annoyance or danger.

Always remember that bonfires can be dangerous from a safety point of view by spreading fire to fences or buildings, or scorching trees or plants. Exploding cans and bottles can also be a hazard when general rubbish is burned. Also bonfires are often used as a refuge by animals so look out for hibernating hedgehogs and sleeping pets.

What's the alternative?

Do you really need to burn? Alternative disposal methods, which are far less environmentally damaging, are available.

Composting and recycling

Most garden and kitchen waste, even cardboard and paper, can be recycled into compost. Rather than burning garden waste or sending food waste off in the dustbin to be buried, a compost bin will produce a useful soil conditioner, thus saving money on commercial products.

Epsom & Ewell residents are eligible for reduced cost compost bins through an organisation called Get Composting, details on compost bins and prices are available on their website, www.getcomposting.com or by calling **0844 571 4444**. Compost bins are also available from local DIY stores and garden centres for varying prices.

Woody waste can be shredded to make it suitable for composting or mulching. You can buy or hire shredders and some allotment societies have their own. Please remember though that shredders can be noisy – don't replace one nuisance with another.

Household waste should not be burned on a bonfire. Many items can be recycled. Surrey County Council provides more detailed information about available recycling facilities. This information is available either by telephoning **08456 009009** or by visiting Surrey County Council's website on:

www.surreycc.gov.uk/environment-housing-and-planning/waste-and-recycling

Recycling advice is also available from Recycle Now through their website; www.recyclenow.com.

Collection

Garden refuse may be taken to the local Community Recycling Centre in Blenheim Road, Epsom. Old beds, sofas and furniture are not suitable for burning and if you cannot take them to the Recycling Centre yourself, Customer Services may be able to arrange a special collection, for a reasonable fee (this also includes fridges, freezers and microwave ovens). Simply call us on **01372 732000**.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council can arrange for collection of your garden waste for a small annual fee and turn it into industrial compost which is then used to line motorway embankments and playing fields. Items which can be collected include grass cuttings, plants and weeds, leaves, clippings, flowers, straw, hay and twigs. To arrange this service please call Customer Services on **01372 732000**.

What's the legal position?

There are no specific laws to prohibit bonfires. If used sensitively, an occasional bonfire, or barbecue, should not cause a major problem and an outright ban would be unreasonable. However, if a neighbour is causing a continuing nuisance by burning rubbish frequently, the law is on your side.

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, it is an offence to cause a statutory nuisance. This includes smoke, fumes or gases “emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance”, and can include nuisance created by bonfires. To be considered a possible nuisance, the bonfire would have to be a regular problem and interfering substantially with your well being, comfort or enjoyment of your property.

If you are bothered by persistent bonfire smoke speak to your neighbour and explain the problem. They may not be aware of the distress they are causing and it might make them more considerate in the future. If this approach fails, contact your local Council's Environmental Health Services. They will take reasonable steps to investigate your complaint and can take action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 by issuing a Nuisance Abatement Notice if necessary.

If you wish, you can take private action under the same Act in the Magistrates' Court. If you require more details on how to undertake your own action you may wish to seek legal advice or speak to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

Remember, if the fire is only occasional this is unlikely to be considered a nuisance. Similarly, if you are being troubled by a series of bonfires from different neighbours, each one of whom only burns occasionally, this will be unlikely to be considered a nuisance and no single individual can be held responsible.

Finally, under the Highways (Amendment) Act 1986, anyone lighting a fire and allowing smoke to drift across a road can face a fine if it endangers traffic. Contact the police in this case on **101**.

But I like bonfires

Bonfires may be a convenient way of getting rid of a large amount of waste, or perhaps you want a bonfire just for fun on Guy Fawkes' night for instance. Some people simply like making fires! If you must have a bonfire, it's only fair to warn your neighbours (and they are much less likely to complain if you do). Remember that bonfire and barbecue parties can cause noise as well as smoke – two good reasons for letting them know in advance. Don't save up your old junk to burn on bonfire night – why not go to an organised event instead!

The Good Bonfire Guidelines

- Check for animals nesting in the bonfire.
- Only burn dry material.
- Never burn household rubbish, rubber tyres, or anything containing plastic, foam or paint.
- Never use old engine oil, meths or petrol to light the fire or to encourage it. You could injure yourself as well as harm the environment.
- Avoid lighting a fire in unsuitable weather conditions – smoke hangs in the air on damp, still days and in the evening. If it is windy the smoke blows over greater distances and may cause nuisance to a wider area.
- Avoid burning at weekends and on bank holidays when people want to enjoy their gardens.
- Keep your fire away from trees, fences and buildings.
- Never leave a fire unattended or leave it to smoulder – douse it with water if necessary.

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