

Useful Contacts

Sedgemoor District Council

Bridgwater House
King Square
Bridgwater
Somerset
TA6 3AR

Sedgemoor Direct
Telephone: 0300 303 7806
Website: www.sedgemoor.gov.uk
E-mail: environmental.services@sedgemoor.gov.uk

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

Telephone: 101
E-mail: pcc@avonandsomerset.pnn.police.uk

Other leaflets in this series

Bonfires
Cockerel noise
Dog barking
Drainage
Light nuisance
Noise nuisance
Pest control

A summary of Environmental Health

Advice on pollution issues

Garden bonfires



Environmental Health

This leaflet has been produced by the Environment Protection Unit at Sedgemoor District Council. The information contained in the leaflet was correct in December 2016.

Sedgemoor
IN SOMERSET

What's wrong with bonfires?

Bonfires can be a problem for your neighbours but are also not good for the environment. The fumes that are given off by burning certain materials can add to levels of air pollution.

Bonfires can also cause problems to people's health, especially people that are asthmatic and young children. Smoke and the smell of smoke can be a real nuisance to neighbours. It can prevent neighbours from enjoying their gardens, opening their windows or hanging out washing.

They can also be unsafe if not watched; they can easily spread. Household waste should never be burnt. Burning waste such as plastics, rubber or painted materials not only creates an unpleasant smell, but produces a range of toxic compounds.

Bonfires and the Law

Very occasionally a bonfire is the best way to dispose of waste. However if only dry garden waste is burnt the occasional bonfire should not cause a problem. In some cases bonfire smoke can become a statutory nuisance.

A statutory nuisance would exist if bonfire smoke substantially interfered with the well-being, comfort or enjoyment of an individual's property. Usually this would mean that bonfires were being lit on a regular basis.

Bonfire guidelines

If you want to have a bonfire, follow these guidelines and you are less likely to cause a statutory nuisance.

- Only burn dry material
- Never burn household rubbish, rubber tyres, or anything containing plastic, foam or paint
- Avoiding starting a bonfire in unsuitable weather conditions
- Always have a hose nearby in case the fire gets out of hand
- Never leave a fire unattended
- Try and situate the bonfire away from houses or public areas
- Do not have bonfires where smoke may drift across the road.

Commercial waste

It is an offence to emit dark smoke by burning commercial waste under the Clean Air Act 1993.

A business operator may also face investigation and formal action by the Environment Agency.

Alternatives

Recycle as much of your household waste as possible (glass, cans, fabric and paper)

Take large items e.g. furniture to Household Waste Recycling centres – old furniture may be of benefit to charities or local voluntary groups for re-use.

Use your garden and kitchen waste to produce compost (see below)

Producing compost at home

Compost can be produced at home using a heap or composter (home made or purpose made). This will turn organic waste into a rich, dark, soil-like material that can be used as a soil conditioner or mulch. A purpose made unit, that is designed to keep the heat in, will produce compost far more quickly than a heap or most home-made composters.

What to do if you're disturbed by bonfires

Explain the problem to your neighbour, they may not realise their actions are causing you distress

If this produces no effect contact your local Environmental Health department

Contact the Police if the smoke is drifting across a highway, endangering traffic.