

# Clean Air Revival Newsletter

Clean Air Revival  
<http://burningissues.org>

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## WOOD SMOKE ISSUES

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### Fighting Wood Smoke Pollution from the Grassroots to Government Level

Welcome to the first issue of the Clean Air Revival Newsletter.

We hope that this newsletter will give you the information and inspiration you need in your fight to regain clean air to breathe and eliminate the wood burning that is affecting your health and your home environment.

Please pass this issue on to others in need of help and suggest that they send an email to [s.brandie@sympatico.ca](mailto:s.brandie@sympatico.ca) to be added to the mailing list.

## Dealing with a Wood Smoke Problem

*By Shirley Brandie*

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.

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*"Wood smoke is chemically active in the body 40 times longer than tobacco smoke!"*  
*(William Pryor, Ph.D., University of Louisiana)*

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## When Your Request is Refused

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*Just one important outdoor source of air pollution remains inadequately addressed in most areas – residential fireplaces and wood stoves. Yet this is a major source of air pollution that produces fine particles and gases containing a multitude of toxic substances and carcinogens. (Wayne Ott, Ph.D. Stanford University)*

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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.
4. Take a good look at the height of the chimney. If you think that it doesn't meet code, call the Building Dept 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. Calling the press in to do an article and catch the chimney or OWB smoke in photos. They may be willing to do an article as a 'Human Interest' story or TV special. This may be enough to entice the burners to give up.
10. Get a doctor's letter verifying how wood smoke compromises your health or public health in general.

## Importance of Visual Evidence

*By Shirley Brandie*



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.

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 of how to show that the wood being burned may contain dangerous materials that should not be burned with the resulting release into the air. Even “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.

Contact us by email at [s.brandie@sympatico.ca](mailto:s.brandie@sympatico.ca) so that we can connect you with those that can provide additional help for you. Please give the State or Province you reside in when you email.

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*“Burning 2 cords of wood produces the same amount of mutagenic (capable of causing cell mutations that can cause cancer) particles as driving 13 gasoline-powered cars 10,000 miles each at 20 miles/gallon. These figures indicate that the worst contribution that an individual is likely to make to the mutagenicity of the air is using a wood stove for heating, followed by a diesel car.”*

*Dr. Joellen Lewtas,  
Contribution of Source Emissions of the Mutagenicity of Ambient Urban Air Particles. U.S., EPA, #91-131.6, 1991)*

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## Some Important News Links:

It's beginning to smell a lot like winter

[http://www.acorn-online.com/joomla15/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=15357:its-beginning-to-smell-a-lot-like-winter&catid=181:columns&Itemid=498](http://www.acorn-online.com/joomla15/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15357:its-beginning-to-smell-a-lot-like-winter&catid=181:columns&Itemid=498)

Smoke a burning issue

[http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver\\_island\\_central/nanaimonewsbulletin/news/35618364.html](http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_central/nanaimonewsbulletin/news/35618364.html)

Wood smoke is toxic

<http://deviantdeziner.blogspot.com/2008/12/wood-smoke-is-toxic.html>

Wood Stoves May Smell Good, but They're Not Good for You

<http://healthyairblog.blogspot.com/search/label/wood%20burning%20stove>

Find even more news links at: <http://burningissues.org> in the "Forum" section.

See "Hot Off the Press" for very recent articles below.

### Hot Off The Press!

[Davis fired up over proposed limits on wood-burning in homes .. Sacramento](#)

By Hudson Sangree [hsangree@sacbee.com](mailto:hsangree@sacbee.com) Published: Tuesday, Dec. 09, 2008

As nights turn cold and days stay gray, the city of Davis is weighing a ban on a symbol of domestic warmth: the wood-burning fireplace. Not just fireplaces, but wood stoves that don't meet strict environmental standards.

Even the cleanest-burning stoves could be used only about half the days of winter, and then for just six hours a day, under the proposed ordinance. If enacted, it would be one of the toughest wood-burning measures in the state.

"It will restrict burning more than any other ordinance that we're aware of," said Alan Pryor, an environmental consultant who has spearheaded the effort.

[Click here to read the full article](#)

We hope you have enjoyed our premiere issue and have learned some valuable hints to use in your quest for freedom from the toxic emissions of smoke!

#### About the Editors:



Shirley Brandie is retired from a medical laboratory and currently doing in-depth research on wood smoke and its effects on health and the environment.



Julie Mellum is the U.S. Midwest Director of Clean Air Revival and is also a Minneapolis Realtor who knows that a wood smoke-impacted neighborhood can negatively affect property values. She is a Research Specialist with a focus on wood smoke and fragrance chemicals, and a lobbyist for legislative changes for a healthier world, especially for children.