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GIVE BAD WOOD THE CHOP - SAYS THE AHHA

A smoking chimney is not a pleasant sight and it's certainly not good for the environment. But is there a way to prevent this unsightly problem without having to rip out your wood heater? Thankfully yes, says the Australian Home Heating Association (AHHA).

To keep your emissions low you just need to know which wood is good, and which is not so good. Burning the wrong type of wood will not only accentuate smoke emissions but if you burn green wood which hasn't been dried properly, you will be increasing creosote build up in your flue which could ultimately lead to a chimney fire. Not an ideal situation.

There are a number of different wood sources in Tasmania but the AHHA recommends that you purchase firewood from a reputable fuel merchant, as this will ensure you obtain seasoned wood that will burn brightly and radiate maximum heat into your home.

Self collection of timber is possible but it does pose some risks. Treated timber - like old furniture - releases harmful chemicals into the atmosphere causing unnecessary pollution. Driftwood is another no-no as the high salt content can damage your wood heater reducing its longevity and potentially rusting your flue.

However, permitted logging of firewood can work really well in terms of cost and efficiency (of course, you'll need to obtain the relevant permit from your local council first). As long as the wood is left to air dry for at least 12 months, to allow excess water to evaporate, this can be a viable option for Tasmanian residents.

But wherever you obtain your firewood, storing it correctly is a really important factor. Firewood should be kept in a dry, undercover area and stacked in a criss-cross fashion to allow air to get between the logs. Cutting your firewood into smaller pieces can also aid in the drying process not to mention making it better to burn - a few smallish logs burn better than one or two large ones.

Thinking ahead and planning when to buy your firewood - a season in advance is what the AHHA suggests - can save you time and money and prevent your fire from smouldering when it should be burning brightly.

So the message is clear - burn the right type of wood and you will gain the maximum benefits from your wood heater with none of the smoke issues that negatively affect our environment.

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For further information or images contact Hannah Hempenstall, Media Officer, Australian Home Heating Association or visit www.homeheat.com.au.

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For further information on correct operation of your wood heater, the AHHA DVD Clear Skies is loaded with education tips on getting the most from your appliance and reducing smoke emissions. For a free copy simply call the Association on (08) 9351 9288. Keep our skies clear!

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TOP TIPS FOR A BETTER BURN

- Burn only dry, well-seasoned wood and never burn chemically treated wood or driftwood.
- Use kindling, newspaper and firelighters to get the fire started.
- Allow full air for 15-20 minutes after each addition of wood.
- Reload your fire with smallish logs and use kindling to regain a bright burn if necessary.
- Leave the air controls open slightly during overnight burn - a little air avoids a lot of smoke.

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