

# Cleaning up a smoke-affected home

Public health bushfire information - December 2010

## My home smells of smoke. What should I do?

If your home has been damaged by fire or smells of smoke from bushfires you should:

### Ventilate your home

- Open the house up to sunlight and fresh air to help remove the odour.

### Wash hard surfaces (furniture, walls and floors)

- Wash indoor surfaces with mild soap or detergent and water.
- For persistent smoke and soot, wear rubber gloves and wash with the following: 4-6 teaspoons of washing powder and 1 cup of household chlorine bleach added to 4 litres of water. Remember to always follow the safety directions on the bleach container.
- Cooking utensils can be washed with detergent and hot water and polished with a suitable polishing agent to remove discolouration.

### Wash soft furnishings (upholstered furniture and bedding)

- Air soft furnishings outside in the sunshine and wind. Mattresses may be able to be cleaned by a specialist mattress repairer. It is almost impossible to get the smell of smoke out of feather pillows or foam.

### Clothing

- Wash affected clothing normally.
- Persistent stains and smoke odour can be sometimes washed from clothing using 4-6 teaspoons of washing powder and 1 cup of household chlorine bleach added to 4 litres of water. After washing, rinse clothes with clean water and dry well. Remember to wear gloves and follow the safety directions on the bleach

container. **Care should be taken as this mix will bleach clothes.**

## What about clothes left on the clothes line?

- These should be rewashed as wind might have removed some smoke odour, however, soot, particles and ash may have been deposited on them.
- Rewashing ensures protection of sensitive skin (for example babies) from possible irritants.

## Are there health effects from smoke and soot in my home?

Low levels of ash on household surfaces are unlikely to cause short or long term health effects.

If anyone in your household is experiencing any health effects from the smoky conditions seek medical advice.

## Further information

### Department of Health

Refer to the *Bushfire smoke and your health* fact sheet available from the Environmental Health Unit, Department of Health at: [www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/emergency\\_mgmt/](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/emergency_mgmt/).

### Environment Protection Authority Victoria

Can be contacted on 03 9695 2722 for further advice on air quality monitoring.

### Your doctor

If you or anyone in your household is experiencing any health effects from the smoky conditions seek medical advice from your doctor.