

Public Health Information

Cleaning up a smoke-affected home

My home smells of smoke. What should I do?

If your home has been damaged by the fire or smells of smoke from the recent bush fires 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)

- To remove smoke and soot from walls, furniture and floors, wear rubber gloves and apply the following mixture: 4-6 tsp of washing powder, 1 cup of household chlorine bleach, 4 litres of warm water.
- Wash indoor surfaces with mild soap or detergent and water.
- Cooking utensils can be washed with soapy water, rinsed then polished with a cleaning powder. Polish brass or copper with a special cleaner or with lemon juice or vinegar, and salt.

Wash soft furnishings (upholstered furniture and bedding)

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

Clothing

- Persistent stains and smoke odour can be sometimes washed from clothing using a mixture of 4-6 tsp of washing powder, 1 cup of household chlorine bleach, 4 litres of warm water. Mix well, add clothes, rinse with clear water and dry well. **BEWARE AS THIS MIX WILL BLEACH CLOTHES.**

What about clothes left on the clothes line?

- Wind might have removed some smoke odour. However, soot, particles and ash may have been deposited on them. These should be rewashed.
- Rewashing ensures protection of sensitive skin (e.g. 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 on bushfire smoke is available on the information sheet *Bushfire smoke and Your Health*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR ADVICE CONTACT

Department of Health –

Contact the Environmental Health Unit Enquiry Line on 1300 761 874 to discuss the health information contained in this sheet.

EPA on 09 9695 2722 for further advice on air quality monitoring.

Your doctor:

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