

After a fire: cleaning up a smoke affected home

Community information

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 follow these instructions.

Ventilate your home

- Open the doors and windows. Sunlight and fresh air will 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: four to six teaspoons of washing powder and one cup of household chlorine bleach added to four 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

- Air clothing outside in the sunshine and wind.
- Wash any affected clothing normally.
- Persistent stains and smoke odour can sometimes be washed from clothing using four to six teaspoons of washing powder and one cup of household chlorine bleach added to four litres of water. After washing, rinse the clothes with clean water and dry them 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 still be on them.
- Rewashing ensures sensitive skin (for example, a baby's skin) is protected from possible irritants.

Are there health effects from ash and soot in my home?

Low levels of ash on household surfaces are unlikely to harm your health.

For further information

Department of Health and Human Services

Refer to the *Bushfire smoke and your health* fact sheet available from the Department of Health and Human Services at: www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/bushfires

Environment Protection Authority Victoria

EPA Victoria can be contacted on 1300 372 842 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.

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