

# Preventing air pollution

## 1. Local controls

Your local council can introduce extra controls on emissions if there are air quality problems in your area.

### Air Quality Management Areas

If air quality falls below required standards, your council will declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and plan for improvements.

[Check if your business is in an AQMA](http://aqma.defra.gov.uk/aqma/maps.php)  
(<http://aqma.defra.gov.uk/aqma/maps.php>) and if you're affected by:

- road charging
- parking restrictions
- increased restrictions on waiting and loading times
- taxes to encourage moving goods by rail
- the review of planning applications by a pollution control team

### Smoke control areas

Your council can also declare a smoke control area. This means you can only use authorised fuels, or exempted furnaces and boilers. Chimney smoke is not allowed, with only a few exceptions.

 **You could be fined up to £1,000 for each offence.**

If you're a contractor working at different locations you should always check if you're in a [smoke control area \(/smoke-control-area-rules\)](/smoke-control-area-rules).

## 2. Dark smoke

The darker the smoke, the more polluting it tends to be. Smoke darker than a specified shade of grey is officially classified as 'dark smoke'.

The [Ringelmann chart \(https://shop.bsigroup.com/products/use-of-the-ringelmann-and-miniature-smoke-charts/standard\)](https://shop.bsigroup.com/products/use-of-the-ringelmann-and-miniature-smoke-charts/standard) is used to define dark smoke. The chart has 5 shades of grey with 0 being clear and 5 being black. Smoke is considered 'dark' if it is shade 2 or darker.

## Chimney and boiler restrictions

You must not release dark smoke from your premises, including from:

- chimneys serving furnaces
- fixed boilers or industrial plants, whether they're attached to buildings or not

There are some exemptions if emissions will not damage health or cause a nuisance.

## 3. Boilers and furnaces

You need a permit for most generators, furnaces and boilers.

### Get a permit

The permit you need depends on the type and amount of fuel you're burning.

#### Part A(1) environmental permit

You'll need a Part A(1) environmental permit if your appliances:

- have an aggregated rated thermal input of 50 megawatts (mw) or more
- burn waste oil, recovered oil or any fuel made from waste, with a rated thermal input of 3 to 50 mw

Get a Part A(1) permit from:

- [Environment Agency \(/government/organisations/environment-agency#org-contacts\)](https://government/organisations/environment-agency#org-contacts) if you're in England
- [Natural Resources Wales \(NRW\)](http://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/about-us/how-to-contact-us/?lang=en) (<http://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/about-us/how-to-contact-us/?lang=en>)
- [Scottish Environment Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](http://www.sepa.org.uk/about_us/contacting_sepa/regional_offices.aspx) ([http://www.sepa.org.uk/about\\_us/contacting\\_sepa/regional\\_offices.aspx](http://www.sepa.org.uk/about_us/contacting_sepa/regional_offices.aspx))

## Part B environmental permit

You'll need a Part B environmental permit if your appliances:

- have a rated thermal input of 20 to 50 mw
- burn waste excluded from the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) with a rated thermal input of 0.4 to 3 mw

Get a Part B permit from:

- your [local council \(/find-your-local-council\)](/find-your-local-council) if you're in England and Wales
- [SEPA \(http://www.sepa.org.uk/about\\_us/contacting\\_sepa/regional\\_offices.aspx\)](http://www.sepa.org.uk/about_us/contacting_sepa/regional_offices.aspx) if you're in Scotland

## Small Waste Incineration Plant (SWIP) environmental permit

You'll need a [Small Waste Incineration Plant \(/government/publications/environmental-permitting-guidance-the-waste-incineration-directive\)](/government/publications/environmental-permitting-guidance-the-waste-incineration-directive) (SWIP) environmental permit if your appliance can burn either:

- less than 10 tonnes per day of hazardous waste
- less than 3 tonnes per hour of non-hazardous waste (equivalent to 72 tonnes per day)

Get a SWIP environmental permit from your [local council \(/find-your-local-council\)](/find-your-local-council).

## Installing furnaces

Your local council must approve:

- the use of a new non-domestic furnace in a building, fixed boiler or industrial plant
- changes to an existing furnace

Contact your [local council \(/find-your-local-council\)](/find-your-local-council) about getting approval for grit and dust arrestment equipment for your furnace if it's going to be used to burn:

- pulverised fuel

- any other solid matter at a rate of 45.4 kilograms (kg) or more an hour
- liquid or gaseous matter at a rate equivalent to 366.4 kilowatts (kw) or more

You might not need approval if your boiler will not create emissions that can damage health or cause a nuisance. Contact your [local council \(/find-your-local-council\)](#) to check if you're exempt.

## Chimney height requirements

Your chimney must be high enough to prevent smoke, grit, dust, gases and fume emissions from damaging health or causing a nuisance. Your local council can refuse your application if your chimney is not high enough.

You must apply for chimney height approval if your boiler's fuel consumption either:

- exceeds 45.4 kg of solid fuel an hour
- exceeds 366.4 kw of liquid or gas fuel

If your approval application is refused your local council will tell you the minimum chimney height you need.

A chimney may be exempt if it's used as part of:

- a temporary replacement, for example if the boiler or furnace is being repaired
- a temporary source of heat or power for building works
- an auxiliary plant to bring the main plant up to operating temperatures
- a mobile source of heat or power for agricultural purposes

If the use of your chimney changes you must re-apply for approval.





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