



Improving Air Quality in Rotorua

Solid fuel burner rules in the Rotorua Airshed







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For more information about air quality rules in Rotorua

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Visit www.boprc.govt.nz/air-plan-change



What's the problem?

Rotorua has the worst winter air quality in the North Island. It's a complex issue with a large number of contributing factors, but old burners or open fireplaces are by far the biggest. These fireplaces burn wood or coal inefficiently, contributing smoky particles to the environment which affects people's health. The air quality in Rotorua breaches the national standards.

Why do we need national standards?

National air quality standards were introduced in 2004 to provide a healthy level of protection for New Zealanders and our natural environment. As part of these standards, 72 areas called airsheds were introduced where air quality is poor and affects people's health. Since the Rotorua airshed was established it has had the highest number of exceedances in the North Island.

What's being done about it?

To address this negative trend, the Bay of Plenty Regional Council and Rotorua Lakes Council have been working with the community to raise awareness about the issue and encourage a shift to clean heating solutions. Over the years this has included extensive campaigns around the impacts of burning wet wood and advice on when to source and how to stack your wood so it's ready for winter. Having dry wood helps but is not a solution for Rotorua's air pollution.

To restrict further pollutants and emissions entering Rotorua's air, in 2010 the Rotorua Lakes Council introduced rules in the Rotorua Air Quality Control Bylaw. As the biggest contributors to the air quality issue, the rules target solid fuel burners by phasing out indoor open fires, restricting the types of burners that can be installed and used in Rotorua homes, and requiring removal of old burners when a property is sold.

The incentives

To encourage a shift to clean heating and to make things easier for Rotorua residents affected by the rules, the Regional Council introduced financial incentives in 2009. The incentives include grants for a "free fire swap" (available to low income households with an annual combined income less than \$50,000 gross). The "Hot Swap" scheme also offers ten year loans for any homeowner regardless of income.

For more information about the incentives visit www.cleanairrotorua.co.nz

Are the changes working?

Since the introduction of the Bylaw and incentives, air quality in Rotorua has improved. However we have some way to go yet as monitoring of air quality in the Rotorua airshed shows it's still in breach of the national standards. To get Rotorua's air quality to a safe level over winter and within the national standards we now need to target the remaining high emission burners.

To do this, during 2017 we updated and strengthened the rules in the Bylaw after extensive public consultation.

We also introduced regional rules in Proposed Plan Change 13 (Air Quality) which manages air quality for the whole Bay of Plenty region, not just Rotorua.

What do the updated rules look like?

The rules have stricter requirements for both existing high emissions burners, and the installation and use of new burners. Existing high emissions burners are targeted because they are the main cause of poor air quality in Rotorua. New burners are targeted because continuing to allow new sources of emissions into an already polluted area continues to make the problem worse.

In summary the rules targeting burners in the Rotorua Airshed are:

- Installation and use of a pellet burner is permitted.
- If you are selling your house, you must remove or replace any non-complying burner (including coal burners, multifuel burners, pre-2005 woodburners, chip heaters, coal ranges) before the property ownership is transferred. Any indoor open fire must also be rendered inoperable at this time.
- Replacing an existing coal burner, multifuel burner or woodburner in the same house is permitted.
- Installing a new woodburner in a house that doesn't currently have a burner requires removal or replacement of an existing coal burner, multifuel burner or woodburner in another house in the Rotorua airshed and is a discretionary activity that requires a resource consent.

- Pre-2005 woodburners are being phased out. You can continue to use existing coal burners, multifuel burners and pre-2005 woodburners until 31 January 2020. In the meantime, you should prepare for replacing these types of burners with a modern appliance.
- If you have a chip heater, coal or wood range (for cooking) you need to start looking at alternatives now.
- Indoor open fires were phased out in 2015 (except for smoking food for wholesale or retail sale or in Heritage buildings) and this rule remains.

Is having a fireplace in your home still an option in Rotorua?

Yes, provided you are using a modern burner like a pellet burner or low emissions woodburner. If you want to install and/or use a solid fuel burner other than what is permitted by the rules, you need to apply for a dispensation and/or a resource consent. Give our Duty Consents Officer a call on 0800 884 880 for more information on these options.

What type of solid fuel burner do I have?

There are a number of ways to heat your home, but some are a lot cleaner than others. To stop Rotorua's air quality from getting worse, rules have been introduced to restrict further emissions from entering the environment.



Depending on what type of burner you have the rules can be quite different. To understand what the rules are for your particular burner you first need to know what type you have. To make this easy we have broken down the different types below.

A solid fuel burner refers to any woodburner, open fire, other burner (like pellet, coal or multi-fuel), potbelly stove, coal range, chip heater or water heater. This doesn't include smaller items like food smokers or heaters that use gas or liquid fuel or pizza ovens, braziers or incinerators.

Most of the Rotorua burner rules target solid fuel burners in 'dwelling houses' or 'buildings'. Despite sounding like the same thing, a dwelling house is not the same as a building. The definition includes structures or outdoor living areas used for the purposes of the residence. So the rules cover solid fuel burners in garages or on decks or patios.

Indoor open fire

This refers to any indoor fireplace with no front door or way to control air flow. The fireplace is generally set into the wall with a chimney, but modern versions may be a freestanding appliance such as a Visor or Jetmaster with a flue.

Pellet burner

These burners are fuelled by custom made pellets made of compressed wood or sawdust. They can be free standing, or inserted into the wall, and the pellets are automatically delivered to the main chamber.

Coal burners and multifuel burners

These are burners fuelled by coal and/or wood. Because coal burns differently to wood, to allow for more airflow it's burned over a raised grate with an ashpan underneath.

Woodburners

Woodburners can be free standing or inserted into a wall. They are designed to heat your home by burning wood within a firebox with a regulated supply of air. It excludes coal or wood ranges, which are designed for cooking, and water heaters such as chip heaters.

When a solid fuel burner is fitted with a water heater (commonly referred to as a wetback) or where the top may be used to cook, it is still a woodburner, as the primary function and design is for home heating, with cooking or heating water as secondary functions.

Other solid fuel burners

There are a number of "other" solid fuel burners not separately defined. These include burners designed to heat water or for cooking such as chip heaters and coal ranges.

Is my solid fuel burner allowed?

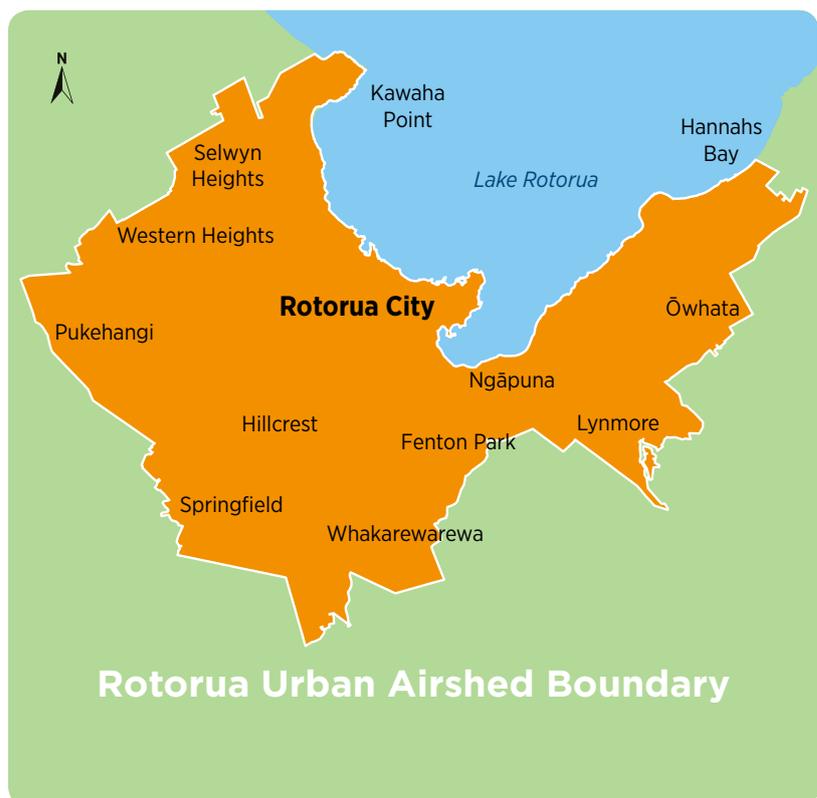
To return Rotorua's winter air quality to safe levels, rules have been set for some solid fuel burners based on their impact to air quality. These rules target solid fuel burners as they are by far the biggest contributor to Rotorua's concerning winter air quality.

Because some burners are a lot cleaner than others the rules are specific to the different solid fuel burner types. Once you've determined what burner you have you can find out what rules apply to your situation. These rules will tell you if your burner is permitted, being phased out or no longer permitted.

So what rules do I need to know about?

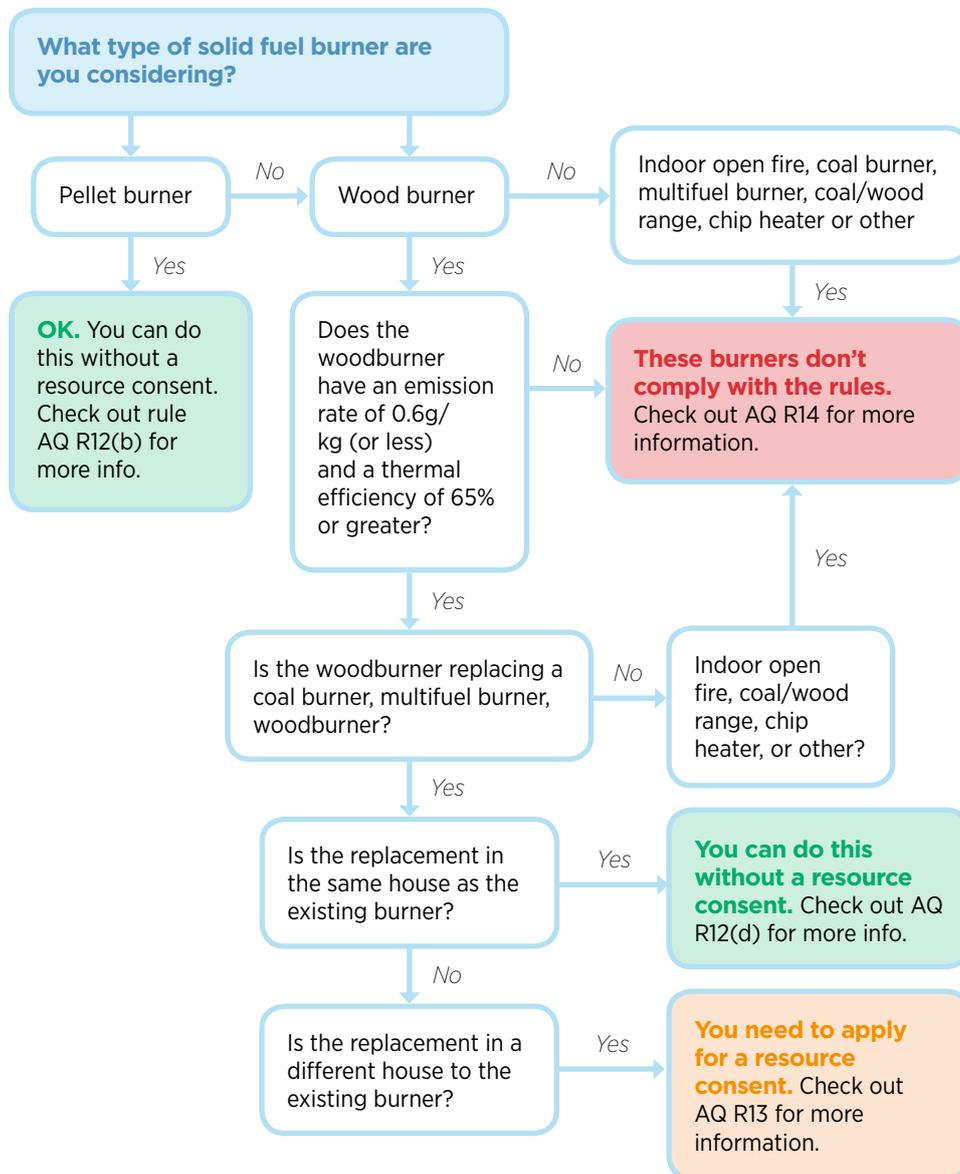
Which rules apply to your burner depends on the type, whether it is new or existing, what date it was installed, how it is designed and what its emission rate is. Once you've figured out what solid fuel burner you have, work your way through the flow chart over the page.

The flow charts only apply to solid fuel burners within the Rotorua Airshed - see the Rotorua Urban Airshed Boundary map (right).



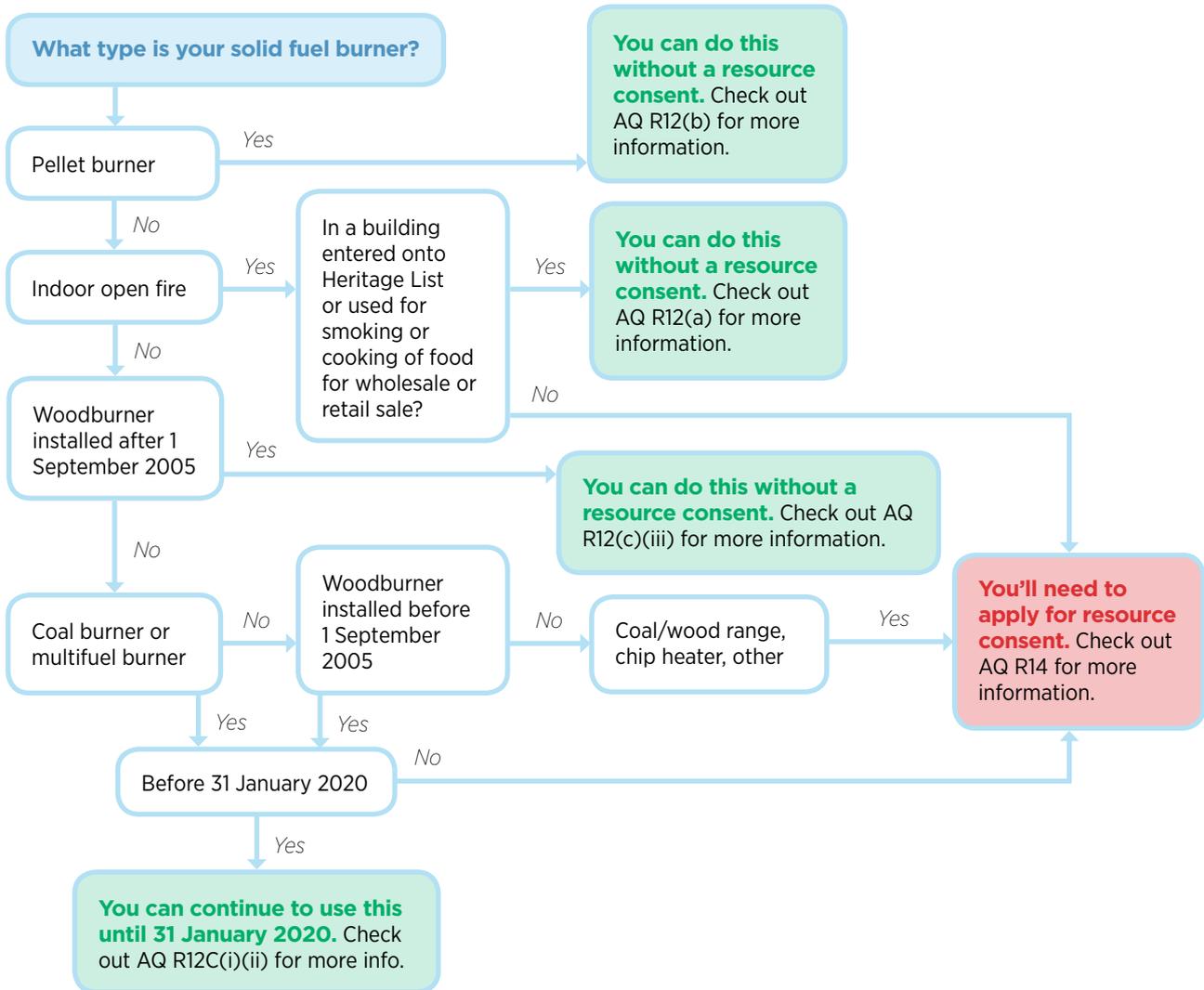
Flow chart 1 – New solid fuel burners

Use this flow chart for the installation and use of new solid fuel burners



Flow chart 2 – existing solid fuel burners

Use this flow chart to determine the status of existing solid fuel burners



The charts say I need to look up AQ R12, AQ R13 or AQ R14

You can learn more about these rules at www.boprc.govt.nz/air-plan-change

AQ R12 includes a number of burners that are permitted, and no resource consent is necessary. This includes pellet burners, modern woodburners, and a very small number of indoor open fires.

AQ R13 is about installing a new woodburner where there is no existing burner. You may apply to the Regional Council for a resource consent to use a new woodburner as a discretionary activity, but only if you offset your emissions. This means an exception to the rules will be considered, but only if you can show how you will compensate for this additional pollution. It's important to note though that even if you can offset your emissions, there is no guarantee that your consent will be granted.

This rule is based on the principle of polluter pays as the homeowner is choosing to add more pollution to an area that is already polluted. The polluter will need to go through the process of sourcing an eligible solid fuel burner to use as an offset, themselves. They will also need to apply for building consents, agreements with homeowners or tenants and any other requirements. The Regional Council will provide no databases, legal advice or financial assistance to homeowners applying for resource consents under this rule.

AQ R14 covers all those types of burners that cause the most pollution. You will need to apply for a resource consent to use these burners.

How do I get a consent?

A resource consent is just what it says it is – approval for you to use or impact a ‘resource’ such as land or air. It comes with a very important responsibility: it requires you to consider the effects of your resource use on the environment and your community, and to reduce any effects that are significant. In Rotorua, because the winter air quality is so bad, you’ll need one if you have an old solid fuel burner or are looking to install a new one.

Still want to go ahead?

If you’ve got this far, you’re probably aware of the rules already. If you do want to read up on Air Quality – Proposed Plan Change 13 though, visit www.boprc.govt.nz/air-plan-change

There is a lot of work involved in applying for resource consent so it’s important you start the process well before you need the consent. Before you start filling in the application, a good place to start can be with a call to the Regional Council Duty Consents Officer on 0800 884 880. They can give you some free advice about the process and what’s involved.

This does not mean you should purchase, install, remove, or replace any solid fuel burner. Council staff need to validate all burners and for existing burners this will need to occur while the burner is still installed in the house.

Where do I start?

If you are impacted by AQ R13 and/or AQ R14 and need a resource consent [you need to fill out application form 4D Discharge Contaminants to Air from Solid Fuel Burners in the Rotorua Airshed](#). You also need to pay the deposit fee prior to submitting that application form (details for the deposit can be found on the application form). Visit www.boprc.govt.nz/consentforms to access this form.

Note, this form will not be accepted for processing if it’s incomplete.

To make filling in the Discharge Contaminants to Air from Solid Fuel Burners in the Rotorua Airshed form easier we’ve included a few tips below.

New burners

If you are affected by AQ R13 read the below.

Under Part 2, Section 1 – Description of activity, you need to provide all the requested information on the new woodburner that you will be installing and using as the subject of the consent. This includes manufacturer, emission rate, thermal efficiency and authorisation number. This information on authorised wood burners is provided by Ministry for the Environment and available at www.boprc.govt.nz/rotoruaair. You will mostly likely not have an installation date or building consent information and this is not required under this rule.

Only woodburners with an emission rate of 0.6g/kg (or less) and a thermal efficiency of 65% (or greater) are covered by AQ R13. If you have selected any other type of appliance or if the woodburner has an emission rate higher than 0.6g/kg and a thermal efficiency lower than 65%, you need to apply for a non-complying activity under AQ R14.

Under Part 2, Section 3 – Mitigation, you need to provide details of the existing solid fuel burner to be removed or replaced to provide the offset .

Only specific solid fuel burners can be used to offset new woodburners under AQ R13. They must be existing coal burners (not coal ranges which are used for cooking), multifuel burners, or woodburners with

an emission rate greater than 0.6g/kg. If you have selected any other type of burner to use as an offset, it will not be accepted and your activity is non-complying under AQ R14.

Regional Council staff will check to make sure that solid fuel burners used as offsets comply with eligibility criteria (see Step 2 below). It's worth checking that the burner you intend to use as an offset complies with these criteria.

In addition, if you are going to replace the existing solid fuel burner with a new woodburner, you need to provide full details of the new woodburner including manufacturer, emission rate, thermal efficiency and authorisation number. New woodburners must have an emission rate of 0.6g/kg (or less) and a thermal efficiency of 65% (or greater). The new woodburner will also need a building consent from the Rotorua Lakes Council.

This information is required when you apply otherwise your application will not be accepted by the Regional Council.

Regional Council validates solid fuel burners

Regional Council staff will validate all solid fuel burners included in the consent application.

This includes ensuring that all new woodburner/s to be installed and used have a thermal efficiency of 0.6g/kg or less and a thermal efficiency of 65% or greater. If the woodburner/s you have selected is not on the Ministry for the Environment's authorised woodburner list, you will need to provide evidence that the woodburner complies with the requirements of the rule.

During this time the Regional Council will also assess the eligibility of the existing solid fuel burner to be used as an offset to ensure that there will be no net increase of emissions to the Rotorua Airshed. This assessment includes a visual inspection of the solid fuel burner as installed in situ, that is as installed in the house. To be eligible, any existing solid fuel burner to be used as an offset must meet the following criteria:

- The burner must be a coal burner, multifuel burner, or woodburner with an emission rate of 0.6g/kg or greater. Pellet burners, coal ranges and chip heaters are not eligible to be used as offsets.
- The burner must be currently installed and still used by the occupier as a heating appliance.
- Any burner that has been replaced, purchased, or upgraded as part of a Central Government or Regional Council incentive scheme (eg Clean Heat or Hot Swap) is not eligible.

Applicant removes or replaces solid fuel burner that will provide the offset

Once the solid fuel burners have been validated, the Regional Council will inform you and you can then remove or replace the existing solid fuel burner that is

being used as an offset.

Remember, if you have opted to replace the existing solid fuel burner being used as an offset with a new woodburner, you need to have a building consent from the Rotorua Lakes Council.

The Regional Council will carry out a second inspection to ensure the removal or replacement is completed.

Resource consent granted or declined

The Regional Council will process the consent application.

Existing burners

If you are affected by AQ R14 read the below.

The Regional Council can only grant a resource consent in specific circumstances and it is up to you as the applicant to provide sufficient evidence to prove your case.

Apply for resource consent

Description of activity you need to provide all the requested information on the solid new woodburner that is the subject of this consent. This includes manufacturer, appliance type, installation date, emission rate, thermal efficiency, authorisation number, and building consent information. Depending on what type of burner you are applying for, and how long it has been at the property, some information may not be available. Fill out as much as you can.

You need to apply additional information and evidence as requested.

The Rotorua Airshed is currently in breach of the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality (NESAQ). Adding new discharges or continuing with existing discharges prolongs the time that the Airshed continues to breach (and causes health effects in the community). Therefore even one additional burner or ongoing discharge from a high-emissions burner is considered to have an adverse effect that is more than minor.

The objective (AQ O2) is to ensure the region's air quality meets the national standards, and policy AQ P7 sets out how this objective will be achieved by listing the types of burners that are targeted. If your solid fuel burner is on the list, then installing or continuing to use it will not clean up Rotorua's air and we won't meet the objective.

This information is required at the time of application otherwise it will not be accepted by the Regional Council.

Resource consent process

The Regional Council will process the consent application.

