

Dirt and Dust from Construction Work

Dust from construction work can cause nuisance to neighbours and interfere with their normal daily activities. If severe enough, it can also damage property and impact on people's health.

Be a Good Neighbor

In many cases, talking to neighbours and nearby residents about planned activities and how long they will take may prevent or solve problems. If work such as excavating, building or landscaping is planned it may be helpful to discuss this with nearby residents beforehand. A sign with contact details on the site or distribution of leaflets explaining the type of work planned and the control measures that will be taken could help prevent complaints.

The Law

The *Environmental Protection Regulation 2008* introduced by the State Government includes controls for dust. Council is legally required to enforce these controls when dust problems occur from residential land or premises. If issues between neighbours cannot be resolved and further complaints are made, Council will have to investigate. If the dust is determined to be a nuisance, Council may issue the residence causing the dust with an 'Direction Notice'. A Direction Notice will detail what offence has taken place and the time frame for the offender to rectify the problem.

If the Direction Notice is not complied with, Council may then issue an on-the-spot fine. It is important to note that government departments other than Council may be responsible for dust from commercial construction sites and commercial activities.

The Criteria

When investigating a smoke complaint, Council will consider:

- the amount of dust being emitted
- the duration and rate of emission and the dust's characteristics and qualities
- the sensitivity of the environment into which the smoke is being emitted and the impact that it has had or may have, and
- the views of any other neighbors or complainants.

Reducing smoke emissions

- Observing weather conditions
If possible, consider the weather conditions before starting work that will create dust. Try to schedule work when the weather is fine rather than in gusty or strong winds. Dust complaints are more frequent in summer as people are outdoors more often and houses are left open for ventilation.
- Retaining vegetation
Retain as many plants and grass on the site as possible. Strips of grass can act as dust barriers

to neighbouring properties. Even low or small amounts of vegetation can significantly lower wind speed and reduce the amount of dust leaving a site.

- Work plan
Plan what work needs to be done. Try to carry out work in stages so some vegetation can be left as barriers as stages are completed.
- Using on-site waste
Try using any on-site waste as dust barriers. For example, unused sheeting or roofing could be used as temporary dust barriers, or green waste could be mulched and spread on the ground to protect the topsoil layer.
- Physical barriers
Physical barriers such as fences can be very effective when used properly. Material such as shade cloth could be erected as a dust fence around the property or work area. It is important to consider the location, height and width of fences prior to construction. Most importantly check the wind direction.
- Water
Spraying water onto topsoil can be very effective in reducing dust. It is important that enough water is used to keep the topsoil layer damp and that spraying is completed before strong breezes develop.
- Hydromulch products
For larger areas, products such as hydromulch could be useful. Hydromulch consists of recycled pulped newspaper that has been mixed with water and can be sprayed onto the ground to form a protective layer. The mix can also include grass seeds and fertilizers. This product could be used at the end of a working day and before weekends.

For further information please contact:

Environmental Health Services at Mount Isa City Council on 4747 3200