

Fact Sheet

Air Pollution – Dirt and Dust

Dust emissions from work sites and other sites with exposed earth can sometimes cause a nuisance to neighbours and interfere with normal daily activities. If severe enough, it can also damage property and impact on people's health. This fact sheet includes information that can help residents and work site operators such as builders and earthwork contractors to reduce dust emissions and meet legal requirements.

Be a good neighbour

Before undertaking any activity that may cause excessive dust emissions, you should implement suitable control measures. It is recommended that the effectiveness of these measures is discussed with neighbouring residents.

The Law

The *Environmental Protection Act 1994* regulates offences relating to nuisances. Council is responsible for investigating certain dust nuisance complaints.

If dust emissions are deemed a nuisance, Council may issue a Direction Notice to a person or company to take steps to stop the emission from causing a nuisance. Failure to comply with a Direction notice may result in fines or prosecution.

The criteria

When investigating a dust complaint, Council may consider:

- Amount of dust being emitted
- Duration and rate of emission and the dust's characteristics and qualities
- Sensitivity of the environment into which the dust is being emitted and the impact that it has or may have
- Views of the affected person/s
- Order of occupancy between the parties
- Measures taken by the person or the company to mitigate the nuisance

Ways to reduce dust emissions

Minimising Exposed Areas

Minimise exposed or open areas as much as possible by working in stages. This will reduce the area of bare or exposed land, thereby reducing the source area of dust nuisance.

Retaining vegetation

Retain as many plants and grass on the site as possible and minimise the exposed open areas. 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 the work site or property.

Water

Regularly watering down dusty areas can be very effective in reducing dust emissions. It is important to use sufficient water, especially if strong winds are forecast.

Physical barriers

Physical barriers such as fences or tree rows can be very effective when used properly. Shade cloth of suitable height and width installed along fences can act as effective dust barriers.

Hydromulch products

Hydromulch mixes can be used on bare earth to form a protective layer. This product could be used at the end of a working day and before weekends. The mix can also include grass seeds and fertilisers.

General Practices

- Regularly watering or compacting the ground where the dust is being emitted
- Limiting the amount, or the time of day, when the vehicles are using dusty areas
- Re-surfacing dusty areas with a heavier and more compact material (e.g. gravel)
- Alternate property vehicle access away from neighbouring residents