

Construction Sites Dust Nuisance

ENVIRONMENTAL NUISANCE

Dust Nuisance factsheet – Construction Sites

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. This fact sheet includes information that may assist residents to reduce dust emissions and meet legal requirements.

Be a Good Neighbour

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 Act 1994* introduced by the State Government include 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 a 'direction notice'. A direction notice will detail what offence has taken place and the time frame that the offender has to rectify the problem. If the direction notice is not complied with, Council may then issue an on-the-spot fine.

The criteria

When investigating a dust complaint, Council will consider:

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

Ways to reduce dust emissions

1) 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.

2) 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.

3) 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. Always try and situate stockpiles away from residences and sensitive areas.

4) Vehicles

Controlling vehicle speeds on site can reduce dust. Cover truck loads when travelling on local roads when possible. Clean truck tailgates and tyres before they leave the construction sites using rumble pads or water.

5) 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.

6) Physical barriers

Physical barriers such as fences can be very effective when used properly. Material such as shade cloth would 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.

7) 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.

8) 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 fertilisers. This product could be used at the end of a working day and before weekends.

For further information on this topic, please contact Gladstone Regional Council's - Environmental Health Section on (07) 4976 6996.