**Bonfire Practices at the Allotments**

Bonfires are a real danger in many ways, especially in dry, hot weather with the risk of sparks setting fire to neighbouring plots or sheds, and they can be a real nuisance to neighbourhoods next door, so many landlords are now banning them from allotment sites. RAHA does not ban bonfires, and we do not want to have to, so please read the following guidelines and follow them.

There are no laws in the U.K. concerning bonfires *per se*, but the following statues apply:

**The Environmental Protection Act 1990** states that a statutory nuisance includes 'smoke, fumes or gasses emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance'. To be a nuisance smoke must be substantially interfering with a person’s enjoyment of their property. Where smoke is drifting across or into someone’s property, if they can’t open windows or hang their washing out for example, then it can easily be judged to be causing a nuisance. If necessary, a notice can be served requiring that the smoke nuisance is abated. Failure to comply with such a notice can result in prosecution and a fine on conviction of up to £5,000.

Under **the Highways Act 1980** anyone lighting a fire and allowing smoke to drift across a road faces a fine if it endangers traffic. If this is the case the police may be contacted.

**Bonfire guidelines**

If you follow these guidelines for both bonfires on the ground and in incinerator bins, the chances are you won't cause a serious nuisance.

* Burn dry material from your plot **only**
* **Never** burn any household or man-made rubbish as these produce toxic fumes.
* **Never** under any circumstances use an accelerator (e.g. petrol) to get the bonfire started.
* **Never** under any circumstances leave the bonfire unattended. Always wait until everything has burned down before leaving the site. It is best not to use water to douse a bonfire; it may appear as if the fire has been safely put out but the water only serves to superheat the ashes and they could re-ignite some hours later – best to use soil or sand to smother the heat.
* Do not have a fire if the wind is variable or if it is blowing directly towards neighbouring properties or a road.
* Avoid burning at weekends and on bank holidays when people want to enjoy their homes and gardens
* Avoid burning when the air quality is ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’. (You can check this by ‘phoning 0800556677, on the Red Button of your digital television or by checking at www.defra.gov.uk.)
* Remember to check for hibernating hedgehogs and sleeping pets!
* Always observe the simple courtesy of letting your neighbours know when you intend to light the fire.

(Compiled from UK Government, National Allotment Association, and the U.K. Fire Service)