



# HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF YOUR OPEN FIRE



**Solid Fuel Association**

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[www.solidfuel.co.uk](http://www.solidfuel.co.uk)

# OPEN FIRES

Nowadays the open fire comes in many different forms. Most are set into fireplace openings but some are freestanding models. A few are fitted with a fan or underfloor draught system that can turn a slumbering fire into a lively blaze within a few seconds. By adding a concealed back boiler, the fire can supply domestic hot water only, or to run up to ten radiators as well.

## LIGHTING YOUR FIRE

- . Clear the grate of ash, empty the ashpan and cover the bars with a layer of fuel.
- . Place one or two firelighters on the bed of fuel, and then more fuel on top.
- . Open ashpit door and apply a match or taper to the firelighters.
- . Once the fire is established, add more fuel and adjust the ashpit door control to achieve the required burning rate.



# OPEN FIRES WITH BACK BOILERS

This type of appliance has a boiler damper usually located at the top of the back boiler.

When lighting, the boiler damper should be closed so that the flue gases pass up the chimney in front of the boiler.

When the damper is open, more heat is directed around the boiler, which will make the fire harder to light.



# RECOMMENDED FUELS FOR OPEN FIRES

Always buy your solid fuel from an **Approved Coal Merchant**



## The Approved Coal Merchants Scheme

The Approved Coal Merchants Scheme ( ACMS ) is the body recognised by Trading Standards as the regulator for the coal trade. Members are fully trained and are committed to serving the customer. All Approved Coal Merchants have agreed to abide by the Coal Trade Code which has the following principles as a basis for honest and fair trading.

- . Supply good quality Coal and Smokeless Fuel correctly described
- . Ensure that packed fuels are marked with maximum information
- . Ensure staff have basic knowledge of the Retail Coal Trade
- . Supply suitable fuels for particular appliances
- . Investigate all consumer complaints properly
- . Display a detailed and up to date price list

The Scheme is funded by the coal industry but has an Independent Chairman and area panels to help resolve consumer complaints.

Approved Coal Merchants display the blue and red logo on their delivery tickets and vehicles.

It is of great importance in ensuring that members of the ACMS can advise their customers correctly on which fuels are suitable for their appliance.

It is an integral part of the Home Study Course available to all merchants and their staff.

## **Bituminous House Coal**

**(NO LONGER SOLD IN ENGLAND)**

**(Scotland & Wales only)**

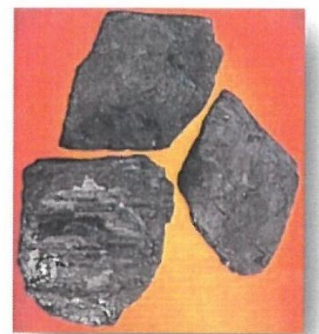
Economically priced and very widely used for open fires.

Available in several different sizes:-

Cobbles—approximately 4" - 6" (100mm—150mm)

Trebles—approximately 1 ½ " - 2" (38mm—80mm)

Doubles—approximately 1" - 2" (25mm—50mm)



High quality approved House coal has no more than 6% ash content and no more than 2% Sulphur content.

Additional Notes: - House coal should only be used on multi-fuel stoves and cookers when recommended by the appliance manufacturer. House coal should not be burnt in smoke control areas other than on a DEFRA exempted appliance.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE - change has come with regard to House Coal**

Since 1 May 2023, in **England** it has been illegal for businesses, including Approved Coal Merchants, to sell house coal for burning at home. However, customers in Wales and Scotland can still burn House Coal as, to date, neither of those countries have issued changes to their laws regarding House Coal usage. We understand the changes will be happening at some point. As soon as the Solid Fuel Association hears anything about the law changing in Scotland or Wales regarding House Coal usage, information will be posted on our website ([solidfuel.co.uk](http://solidfuel.co.uk)) and on our social media sites.

## Homefire Smokeless Coal

Homefire has been manufactured for over 60 years. This extremely hard and durable, hexagonal shaped briquette is particularly suited for open fires, multi-fuel stoves and roomheaters, emitting up to 80 percent less smoke, 25 percent less Carbon Dioxide and burning up to 40 percent longer than traditional house coal. Low ash and easy to bank overnight if required.

HETAS Approved  Manufactured in UK



## Supertherm

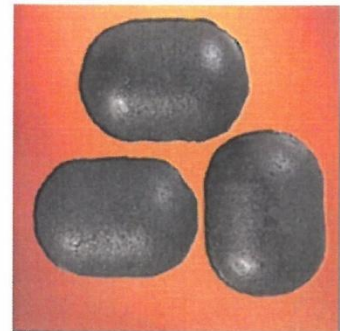
Supertherm is a value for money smokeless fuel, suitable for open fires, multi-fuel stoves and roomheaters.

Supertherm is a large, oval shaped briquette that burns with an attractive flame, low ash and banks comfortably overnight if required. The single line across the middle of the briquette, makes it easy to identify.

HETAS Approved  Manufactured in UK



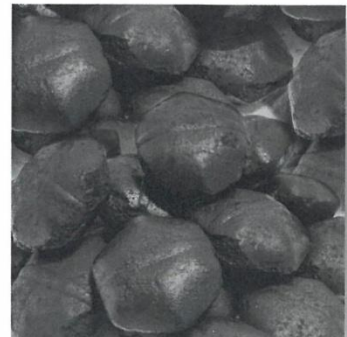
Note: Supertherm may not be available in all areas.



## Homefire Ecoal Smokeless Coal

The Cleaner, Greener smokeless fuel made from up to 50 percent renewable materials. Homefire Ecoal is unique, producing up to 40 percent less Carbon Dioxide and 80 percent less smoke than house coal, with no compromise on performance, making it the most environmentally friendly smokeless fuel available in the UK today. Its larger, hexagonal shape promotes airflow, making it an ideal fuel for open fires and multi-fuel stoves.

HETAS Approved  Manufactured in UK



## Heat Smokeless

Heat Smokeless is a high heat, low ash smokeless coal for use on open fires and multi-fuel stoves, cookers and roomheaters. Ideal for consumers wanting a hot fire at a great value.

HETAS Approved  Manufactured in UK



## Red

Red is a Ready to Burn compliant, fully smokeless solid fuel and as with all Oxbow fuels is ideal for open fires, closed appliances and multi-fuel stoves. Red is the perfect alternative to house coal, offering a low ash clean burn.

HETAS Approved  Manufactured in UK



If you need any further advice regarding fuels for your open fire you can contact us and we will find an Approved Coal Merchant local to you.

This advice is also available on the Solid Fuel Association website  
([www.solidfuel.co.uk](http://www.solidfuel.co.uk))

If you already have a merchant in your local area they will be pleased to help and supply you with an alternative fuel should you wish to change.

# LOOKING AFTER YOUR OPEN FIRE

If an appliance is fitted with fire bars, don't allow the ash to build up and touch them – they will burn away. Use a poker to clear the ash and clinker that collects above the fire bars and empty at regular intervals the ashpan which is situated under the fire bars. The appliance will not function to capacity if the grate is clogged.

For overnight burning, clear the fuel bed of ash and empty the ashpan before the fire has burned right down. Fill the grate with fresh fuel so that it is level with the top edge of the deepening bar and sloping upwards towards the back.

Replace the ashpan and front cover, then set the air control to the closed position. Close the boiler damper if applicable.

Generally in the case of open fires with high output back boilers the water temperature should be regulated by the rate of burning i.e. by air control. The damper should only be fully opened when hot water is needed quickly or full radiator heating is required. When the boiler damper is open, the air control should also be open. This allows air to be drawn through the bottom grate and prevents fire bar damage.

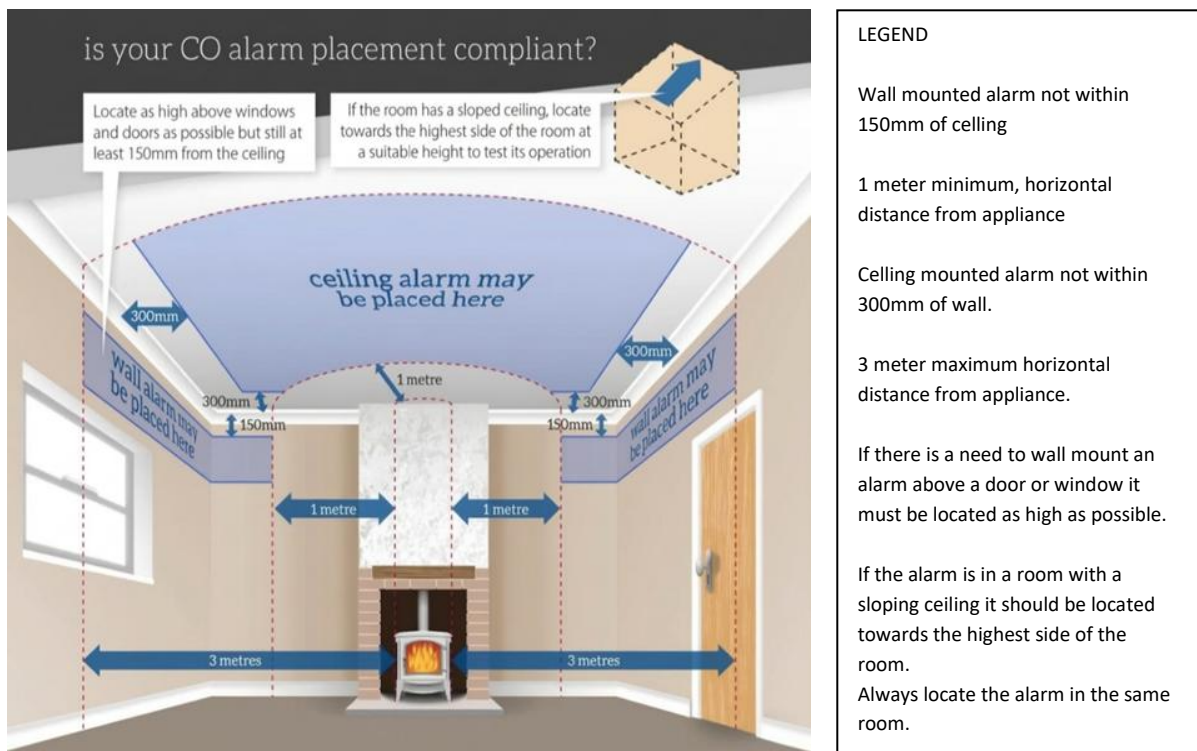
The main chimney flue should be swept at least once a year if you are only burning Smokeless Fuel. If you are burning Bituminous Coal and Logs we recommend having your chimney swept at least twice a year.

Blocked chimneys can cause deadly fumes to enter the dwelling area, **Carbon Monoxide Fumes**. For your own protection, it's essential that a carbon monoxide detector should be installed.

The general provisions within Approved Document J and BS8303 ask that the CO alarm be positioned in a location which provides means for the immediate detection of CO upon spillage from a solid fuel appliance. Guidance in Approved Document J and in BS8303 is that CO alarms should be positioned as follows;

**A) On the ceiling at least 300mm from any wall or if its located on a wall as high up as possible( above any doors or windows ) but not within 150mm of the ceiling; and**

**B) Between 1m and 3m horizontally from the appliance.**



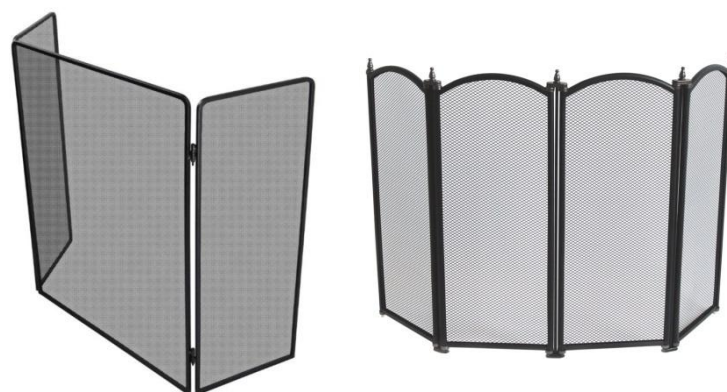
These stated parameters allow for the earliest possible detection of CO as the combustion products disperse and mix with the air within the room. In these positions the detector is also avoiding the relevant “dead zone “areas

whereby the velocity of gases disperse and convect in a circular motion and do not reach the corner areas of the room. It's also important to ensure CO alarms are not located directly next to the appliance, or within areas where air disperses at a slower rate. Typically installations of solid fuel appliances are within a builder's recess, where the flue is contained within a masonry stack which protrudes slightly into the room in which the appliance is installed. Following best practice, it is also recommended for CO alarms not to be located on the side wall of the masonry stack, which again acts as a potential "dead zone " which may increase the activation response time of the alarm as the CO disperses into the room in a radiant motion.

If the appliance incorporates a fan, its blades should be kept free from any fluff build up.

Scraping the flueways once a week will help maintain high efficiency. Scraping off tar deposits from open fires with high output back boilers will also maintain heat output to the boiler.

When the room is unoccupied, use a fire screen and/or spark guard with an open fire. A fire screen should always be used if children, the elderly, or infirm are in the room.



Do not apply excessive draft excluders to doors and windows or block any air vents. All solid fuel appliances require an adequate air supply to ensure that the efficient combustion of fuel occurs and the chimney functions correctly. Failure to provide sufficient air for combustion and ventilation into the room in which the appliance is installed can have very serious consequences. Smoking back will occur and poor combustion of the fuel will increase levels of soot deposits and **Carbon Monoxide** which is a serious health hazard.



The information contained in this guide should be read in conjunction with the manufacturers operating instructions.

# Always buy solid fuel from an Approved Coal Merchant

Our team of specialists are always available to give advice on all aspects of solid fuel heating including installation, maintenance and spare parts. Other guides are available on request.

**Phone 01773 835400 for details**

[www.coalmerchants.co.uk](http://www.coalmerchants.co.uk)



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Appliance installations should always be carried out by a qualified installer. This leaflet is for guidance only and should be used for reference purposes.