

WOOD BURNING SAFETY TIP SHEET

According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) heating fires account for 36% of residential home fires in rural areas every year. Often these fires are due to creosote buildup in chimneys and stovepipes. All home heating systems require regular maintenance to function safely and efficiently. The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) encourages you to practice the follow fire safety steps to keep those home fires safely burning. Remember, fire safety is your personal responsibility.... Fire Stops With You!

Keep Fireplaces and Wood Stoves Clean

- Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations, and flammable materials.
- Leave glass doors open while burning a fire. Leaving the doors open ensures that the fire receives enough air to ensure complete combustion and keeps creosote from building up in the chimney.
- Close glass doors when the fire is out to keep air from the chimney opening from getting into the room. Most glass fireplace doors have a metal mesh screen which should be closed when the glass doors are open. This mesh screen helps keep embers from getting out of the fireplace area.
- Always use a metal mesh screen with the fireplaces that do not have a glass fireplace door.
- Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor temperature.
- Keep air inlets on wood stoves open, and never restrict air supply to fireplaces. Otherwise, you may cause creosote buildup that could lead to a chimney fire.
- Use fire-resistant materials on walls around wood stoves.

Safely Burn Fuels

- **Before starting the fire, be sure to open the damper.**
- **Close the damper securely only when the fire is completely out, and ashes are cold.**
- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Use only seasoned hardwood. Soft, moist wood accelerates creosote buildup. In pellet stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood pellets.
- Build small fires that burn completely and produce less smoke.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, trash, or debris in your fireplace or wood stove.
- When building a fire, place logs at the rear of the fireplace on an adequate supporting grate.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house.

- Allow ashes to cool completely before disposing of them. Place ashes in a tightly covered metal container and keep the ash container at least 10 feet away from your home and any other nearby buildings. Never empty the ash directly into a trash can. Douse and saturate the ashes with water.

There are two main types of fireplaces and chimneys:

The first is a masonry or most people refer to it as a brick fireplace and chimney. This type of fireplace can be used for wood burning, artificial gas logs or may have a wood or gas insert inside of it. If the fireplace does not have an insert inside of it then it is not meant to be used as a heat source, as most of the heat goes straight up the chimney. If the fireplace does have an insert then it should be used accordingly with the manufacturer's instructions. Inserts provide a significant amount of heat however they will rarely heat the entire house. The main thing to cause a chimney fire or a structure fire is the overheating of a fireplace to put out more heat than it is intended for.

The other main type of fireplace is called a Prefabricated or factory-built fireplace. These types of fireplaces and chimneys are commonly found in apartment complexes or areas with mass produced homes. All of these fireplaces have a label inside of them that will tell you the name of the manufacturer, the model of the fireplace and some will list the clearances the fireplace is supposed to meet. Most of the time the manual to the fireplace can be found online and will tell you what is allowed and what is not allowed with the fireplace or what can be installed in the fireplace and what should never be used in the fireplace. These types of fireplaces are intended to be used as a decorative appliance, which means they are to add ambiance, they are not to be used as a heat source. They may be wood burning or may have a set of artificial logs if the manufacturer of the fireplace allows it, however they should never have an insert installed inside of the fireplace. For liability reasons most of the fireplace manufacturers will put on the label of the fireplace, "Do not use any parts or accessories that are not manufactured or approved by us". This is because all of these fireplaces are tested in a lab with the approved parts to insure they can withstand the heat and everything functions properly. If any parts are used that the manufacturer does not allow, then this can change the amount of heat the fireplace can produce and the functionality of the fireplace. This can be a potential liability as most of the units allow wood or other combustible material to be close to the fireplace and if the functionality of the fireplace changes then the wood or combustibles may ignite if the fireplace is overheated.

The best way to use any fireplace is to keep the fires small with 1-2 pieces of wood at a time and for larger fireplaces a maximum of three pieces of wood at a time. Like mentioned above most fireplaces are not meant to be used as a source of heat for the home.

Fireplace and Wood Stove Safety



Follow these heating safety tips to help keep your home fire safe this winter.

- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from your fireplace or wood stove.
- Do not burn paper in your fireplace or wood stove.
- Put the fire out before you go to sleep or leave your home.
- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned each year by a professional.
- Put ashes in a metal container with a lid. Place the container outside at least 10 feet from your home.



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Fireplace safety

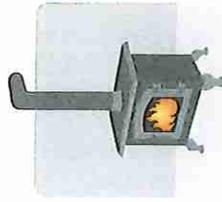
- Keep a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace to prevent embers or sparks from jumping out.



- Make sure fireplace "on" switches and remote controls are out of the reach of children.

Wood stove safety

- Make sure your wood stove has been tested by a qualified testing laboratory.
- Keep the doors of your wood stove closed unless loading or stoking the live fire.



U.S. Fire Administration

For more information, visit www.usfa.fema.gov.



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