



Fireplace Safety Tips

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Safety Tips:

Chimney Safety

Failing to maintain your wood stove or fireplace properly can lead to a chimney fire. Chimney fires occur when combustible deposits on the inner walls of the chimney ignite. These combustible deposits, called "creosote," are a natural byproduct of woodburning. A fire hazard exists if 1/4 inch of creosote (or more) coats the inner walls of the chimney.

Preventing Chimney Fires

Chimney fires do not occur in clean, intact, properly installed chimneys. Have a professional chimney sweep clean and inspect your appliance at least once a year. More frequent cleanings may be required, based on the type of wood burned, the type of appliance, and the frequency of use. In general, pre-1990 stoves, or any appliance that is used frequently, will require more than one cleaning per year.

Detecting a Chimney Fire

The first indication of a chimney fire is usually the noise – a roaring sound that grows louder as the fire's intensity increases. Clouds of black smoke and sparks will be seen exiting the top of the chimney; in severe fires, flames can extend several feet above the chimney.

What to do

In case of a chimney fire, follow these steps:

1. Call the fire department immediately.
2. Alert others in the building to evacuate.
3. Close the appliance's dampers and/or the primary air inlet controls, limiting the fire's air supply and reducing its intensity. If there is a barometric damper in the chimney connector, plug or close the opening in the barometric damper.
4. Open the appliance door just enough to insert the nozzle of a 10 lb. dry chemical fire extinguisher rated for Class ABC fires. Discharge the entire contents of the extinguisher into the appliance and shut the door.
5. If possible, wet down the roof and other outside combustibles to prevent fires ignited by shooting sparks and flames.
6. Closely monitor all combustible surfaces near the chimney. During severe chimney fires, these surfaces can become hot enough to ignite.

Post-Fire Inspection

After a chimney fire, have the chimney inspected by a professional chimney sweep or wood stove/fireplace installer; choose a professional who has earned credentials from the [National Chimney Sweep Guild](#), [Chimney Safety Institute](#), or the [National Fireplace Institute®](#). Do not use the chimney until it has been inspected by a professional. The excessive heat produced by a chimney fire can crack chimney walls, damage chimney liners, and damage some types of factory-built chimneys. If not repaired, these damages create a greater possibility for any subsequent chimney fire to spread beyond the confines of the flue to the house.

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