

10 WAYS TO PREVENT HOME HEATING HAZARDS AND SAVE HARD-EARNED DOLLARS!

- Have your chimney checked every year (no matter how you heat your home) to make sure the chimney can do its job to properly vent hot, toxic gases and carbon monoxide from the heating system to the outdoors.
- To help reduce creosote build-up in your wood-burning chimney system, burn only well-seasoned hardwoods. If you don't know how to build a hot, safe fire, ask A Clean Sweep for tips on proper wood-burning techniques.
- If you own or are planning to install a high efficiency gas furnace, ask a chimney professional to check that the furnace is vented in accordance with the National Fuel gas Code.
- Have a high-quality, long-lasting chimney cap installed to keep out debris and prevent birds, animals and insects from nesting in your chimney.
- Following a violent storm, earthquake, flood or lightning strike, have your chimney inspected for damage -- inside and out. This includes checking for cracks and fallen bricks. For safety's sake, **DO NOT USE YOUR CHIMNEY** until it is checked by a chimney professional.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector to warn of harmful gases that may be entering your home because of a blocked or damaged chimney.
- Have your chimney flashing (the seal between the chimney and the roof) inspected and maintained. Flashing prevents rain water and snow melt from entering your home and causing costly damage to your walls and ceilings.
- Save energy dollars and eliminate unpleasant off-season odors. Have a sealing damper installed in your wood-burning chimney system.
- Have your chimney sweep ensure that your chimney has an appropriate liner. Chimney liners are required in new construction to separate hot heating system emissions from the structure of your home.



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EASY TIPS FOR STARTING YOUR FIRE

Open the damper

This is forgotten more often than most people care to admit.

Ingredients

You will need three things to start a fire:

Tinder - Crumpled up newspaper makes the best tinder. You can also use small twigs, pine needles, or pine cones.

Kindling - Large twigs, small branches, and small splits of wood anywhere from 1/4" to 1" in thickness will do. This is the most important ingredient for building a good fire and usually the most overlooked.

Fuel - Use only well-seasoned hardwood. If you have to burn softwoods, be certain they are well seasoned. Look for split, dry wood that has been stacked for up to a year. Loose bark and cracks in the ends are signs of seasoned wood.

Warm up the flue

For fireplaces, warm up the flue by holding a piece of burning rolled-up newspaper in the (opened) damper region for 10-15 seconds. This helps the flue establish a good draft. Then light the tinder. Within a few minutes, you should have a nice, hot, roaring fire!

Starting the fire

Arrange two small to medium sized pieces of firewood on the grate, and place some crumpled up newspaper for tinder between the logs.

Now cover the tinder with several pieces of kindling. Be generous with the kindling-it's the most important element in starting your fire.

Now, place two more pieces of firewood on top of the kindling and two more at right angles to these two. Leave some space between the logs for air circulation.

THE DO'S & DON'TS OF CHIMNEY SAFETY

- ✓ **Do** check the manufacturer's guidelines for your woodstove or insert.
- ✓ **Do** use seasoned hardwood.
- ✓ **Do** use commercial fire starters if you like. They eliminate the need for tinder and reduce the amount of kindling required.
- ✗ **Don't** use charcoal lighter fluid or other flammable liquids. These are extremely dangerous (Gel fire starters are ok.)
- ✗ **Don't** use coal in a woodstove or fireplace unless there are specific written instructions - it will burn, but not safely.

✗ **Don't** burn artificial logs in a woodstove unless they are specifically designed for woodstove use. Artificial logs can dirty the chimney much faster than regular wood and can be hazardous in certain situations.

✗ **Don't** burn treated lumber, trash, or anything other than wood in your fireplace or woodstove.

TROUBLE-SHOOTING HINTS

Smoke Problems

Is your damper open? If it is and the smoking continues, open a nearby window a crack for a minute or two until the fire is going well then you can close it again.

If it just smokes when you light the fire, it may be because the flue is cold. Did you warm the flue with a burning rolled up newspaper held in the damper region? (If not, that usually works.)

If the chimney continues to smoke, call a chimney professional. Your chimney may be clogged by animal nests or an accumulation of soot and creosote, or have additional problems.

Chimney Odors

The sour, sickly odor is the smell of creosote. The solution is to call a chimney professional to clean your chimney and install a chimney cap to prevent water from entering and reacting with the creosote. Your chimney professional can also recommend a good chimney deodorant to handle any remaining odor which has been absorbed into the masonry.

Creosote Buildup

Slow smoldering fires and/or the use of unseasoned wood can create "cool" smoke and weak draft. Under these conditions the smoke condenses and sticks to the chimney's interior, forming highly flammable creosote.

AVOIDING CHIMNEY FIRES

Creosote is the main cause of chimney fires. A buildup of creosote is highly combustible and can result in a chimney fire. To minimize creosote:

- Burn only seasoned woods.
- Do not burn trash in a fireplace or woodstove.
- Don't allow the fire to smolder.
- Contact your chimney professional to clean your chimney regularly.