

Keeping the Fireplace Burning Safely

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Before you light up the chimney in your home expecting to have a nice warm experience, give some thought to the condition of your fireplace/woodstove or your enjoyment might be short-lived. In staying safe this winter, our goal should be to prevent chimney fires, carbon monoxide poisoning and to keep fireplaces functioning properly.

Top 10 Tips from Chimney Safety Institute of America and the Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department:

- 1. Get an annual chimney check.** Have chimneys inspected annually, and cleaned as necessary, by a qualified professional chimney service technician. This reduces the risk of fires and carbon monoxide poisonings due to creosote buildup or obstructions in the chimneys.
- 2. Keep it clear.** Keep tree branches and leaves at least 15 feet away from the top of the chimney.
- 3. Install a chimney cap** to keep debris and animals out of the chimney.
- 4. Choose the right fuel.** For burning firewood in wood stoves or fireplaces, choose well-seasoned wood that has been split for a minimum of six months - one year and stored in a covered and elevated location. Never burn Christmas trees or treated wood in your fireplace or wood stove.
- 5. Build it right.** Place firewood or fire logs at the rear of the fireplace on a supporting grate. To start the fire, use kindling or a commercial firelighter. Never use flammable liquids.
- 6. Keep the hearth area clear.** Combustible material too close to the fireplace, or to a wood stove, could easily catch fire. Keep furniture at least 36" away from the hearth.
- 7. Use a fireplace screen.** Use metal mesh or a screen in front of the fireplace to catch flying sparks that could ignite or burn holes in the carpet or flooring.
- 8. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.** Place smoke alarms throughout the house: in the bedrooms, hallways outside the bedrooms and on each level of the home. Check batteries in the spring and fall. When you change your clocks for Daylight Savings Time, remember to check your batteries.
- 9. Never leave a fire unattended.** Before turning in for the evening, be sure that the fire is fully extinguished. Supervise children and pets closely around wood stoves and fireplaces. Keep a 3 foot clearance around the entire fireplace area.
- 10. Annual inspections.** Should be performed by Certified Chimney Sweeps.

These chimney sweeps have earned the industry's most respected credential by passing an intensive examination based on fire codes, clearances and standards for the construction and maintenance of chimney and venting systems. The National Fire Protection Association also recommends that all chimneys are inspected on an annual basis.