

Fireplace Safety Tips

As the temperatures begin to cool, it is important to ensure your chimney is inspected prior to its first use and that it is cleaned if necessary. The Chimney Safety Institute of America (www.CSIA.org) and the National Fire Protection Association (www.nfpa.org) recommend annual chimney inspections by a qualified and licensed professional and sweeping when necessary. According to the most recent statistics from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, an average of 25,100 chimney fires are responsible for 30 deaths and \$126.1 million in property damage each year.

- Ensure that your chimney is cleaned and inspected by a licensed professional once a year.
 - Annual chimney inspections allow the chimney sweep to note cracks, creosote buildup or other obstructions which may diminish the functionality of the system and create an environment where chimney fires or carbon monoxide intrusion are likely.
- A spark arrestor across the top of a chimney will prevent sparks from igniting your roof. Maintain your roof free of leaves and other dry vegetation accumulation.
- Maintain trees and branches at least 15 feet from the outlet of the chimney.
- Use the proper fuel (seasoned hardwood, pellets, and gas/propane) for your type of system. Never use gasoline, kerosene, or other flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Fireplaces should have a sturdy screen across the front to prevent embers from flying or logs from rolling out.
- Keep combustible material and furnishings at least 3 feet from the fireplace opening.
- When clearing ashes from the fireplace, be sure to put them into a metal container with a lid—never into a cardboard box, paper bag, or plastic garbage can or toter.
- Follow manufacturer’s instructions carefully. Many “non-masonry” fireplace/chimney units have limitations on the amount of heat they can safely withstand.
- Install and maintain smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of your home.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors in your home.
- Never leave a fire unattended – ensure the fire is completely extinguished before leaving the home or going to bed.