

Safety Tip if you have a Fire Place or Wood Burning Stove

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

If you have a fireplace or wood-burning stove, summer is a good time to see about getting your chimney cleaned. You probably not using them then, and professional chimney sweeps in your area are less busy in the summer than in the fall and winter.

Because of the high cost of oil and electricity, fireplaces and wood burning stoves have become more popular in the United States and in Canada. Most people don't seem to realize that chimneys need regular cleaning when wood is burned, particularly when it is burned on a daily basis during the heating season.

Fire Hazard

A dirty chimney is a potential fire hazard.

Dust-like carbon deposits called creosote collect on the inside of a chimney flue, impairing the draft. Wood stoves manufacturers estimate that as little as one millimeter of creosote lining the chimney can reduce a stove's efficiency by up to 15 percent. If the carbon buildup is heavy this might be the least of your worries.

These carbon deposits are extremely flammable and burn with an intense flame that can melt mortar. Flaming balls of debris may be lifted out of your chimney onto the roof, your lawn or your next-door neighbor's house. Smoke may backup into your home, causing considerable smoke damage.

If conditions are right, your whole house could catch fire. And even if damage is minimal, the chimney may be so badly weakened that it isn't safe to use anymore.

How do you know weather your chimney needs cleaning? You may be able to tell by using a powerful light and a mirror to look up the flue from the bottom. If the bricks look pink, your okay; if they are black or furry looking; its time for a sweeping.

Get Professional Help

If you're still not sure, call a professional chimney sweep. He or she will inspect the chimney and if it doesn't need cleaning, you will be told.

The National Fire Protection Association recommends that chimneys be inspected and cleaned once a year. When a wood-burning stove is used regularly, the chimney should be checked every six months.

For More Information On This Subject and Other Related Subjects Please Contact United States Fire Administration

Thank You For Visiting The Hershey Volunteer Fire Department's Website – www.hersheyfire.org

A chimney is cleaned from the top to the bottom. First, the smoke box is sealed off. Then the sweep chooses a brush to correspond to the shape and size of the flue. He or She will move the tightly fitted brush up and down the flue on six-foot extensions of cable. A high-powered vacuum is used to remove the carbon deposits and control any soot that might escape from the smoke box.

A professional sweep will give you the price before the work is done. Don't be afraid to ask for references. Make sure the sweep is covered by insurance; liability, property damage and complete operations coverage should be carried.

A properly installed and properly maintained system can mean economy with safety.

For More Information On This Subject and Other Related Subjects Please Contact United States Fire Administration

Thank You For Visiting The Hershey Volunteer Fire Department's Website – www.hersheyfire.org