



Chimney Safety

According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), 22,500 residential fires and 20 deaths were caused by fires that started in fireplaces, chimneys, and chimney connectors in 2014. These are the latest statistics available as of October 2017.

Now that the nation has entered the heating season, CPSC strongly urges you, if you have a stove or fireplace, to check the chimney for any damage that may have occurred in the past heating season. If it is difficult to examine the chimney, a local chimney repairman, chimney "sweep," or dealer can help. Have any damage repaired NOW.

Most fires involving either masonry or prefabricated metal chimneys occur because of improper installation, use, or maintenance. CPSC has identified the following common causes of fires:

- Improper chimney installation too close to wood framing.
- Installation of thermal insulation too close to the chimney.
- Improperly passing the stovepipe or chimney through a ceiling or wall, causing ignition of wood framing.
- Structural damage to the chimney caused by the ignition of creosote (a black tar-like substance that builds up inside the chimney in normal use).

The CPSC advises owners of all chimneys to:

- Be sure that the chimney and stovepipe were installed correctly in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and local codes. If there is any doubt, a building inspector or fire official can determine whether the system is properly installed.
- Minimize creosote formation by using proper stove size and avoiding using low damper settings for extended periods of time.
- Have the chimney checked and cleaned routinely by a chimney "sweep" at least once a year. Inspect it frequently, as often as twice a month if necessary, and clean when a creosote buildup is noted.
- Always operate your appliance within the manufacturer's recommended temperature limits. Too low a temperature increases creosote buildup, and too high a temperature may eventually cause damage to the chimney and result in a fire.
- Frequently look for signs of structural failure.

If you have had a fire or other safety problem with your chimney, or would like additional information, call the Commission's toll-free Hotline 800-638-CPSC.