



Department of Commerce

Division of State Fire Marshal

John R. Kasich, **Governor**
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BURNING WOOD SAFELY

Installation

Installation of a wood burning stove should be done in accordance with local codes and the manufacturer's instructions. Use a qualified professional to install stoves, chimney connectors and chimneys. Wood stoves should bear the label of a recognized testing laboratory.

Firing Your Stove

Some ash left over from the last fire can be desirable, since it acts as a heat reflector in the bottom of the stove.

Crumple a small amount of paper and place it in the fire chamber. Over the paper place kindling wood and a few pieces of small fuel wood, be sure the damper is open, then light the paper. Once the wood begins to burn well and a good draft has been created, larger pieces of wood may be added.

NEVER

- Use flammable liquids to light a fire.
- Store flammable liquids in an area where a stove is being used.
- Burn trash, large amounts of paper or small twigs.
- "Over Fire" so that stove pipe becomes "Red Hot".
- Leave the doors open or screen off except to fuel the fire.
- Dry clothing closer than three feet to the stove.

Chimney Fires

A chimney fire can be a frightening and dangerous experience. A Chimney fire may produce loud crackling, rumbling or roaring noises and a red hot stovepipe. These fires can spread to the building itself, causing serious loss and endangering the lives of your family.

Chimney fires are caused when CREOSOTE, a normal by-product of burning wood, collects on the inside of the chimney and is ignited. The causes of creosote buildup are listed below.

Reduce Creosote Build

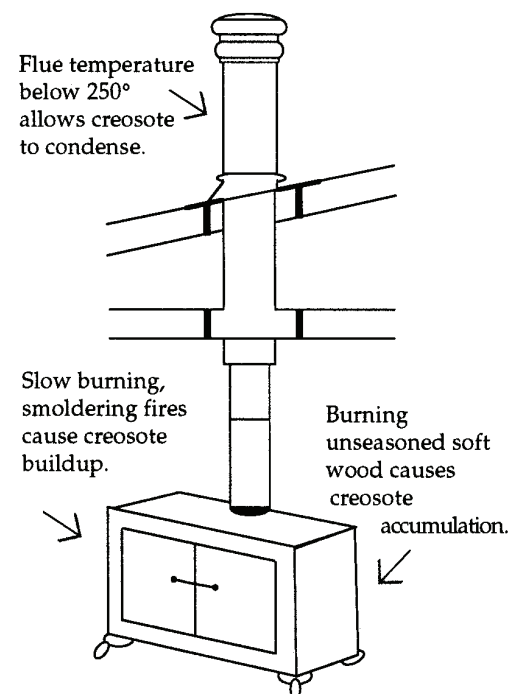
These steps will help limit creosote buildup.

- Burn only dry, seasoned wood.
- Use of a chimney thermometer will help provide monitoring of temperatures to ensure you are maintaining the ideal burning temperatures.
- Avoid slow burning smoky fires.
- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned every year.

If you do have a chimney fire, in spite of your precautions, do these things:

- Call the Fire Department and get everyone out of the house.
- Close the stove door, draft opening and damper to cut off air to the fire.
- Never throw water on a hot stove.

A chimney fire may damage parts of the chimney or stove pipe. Be sure to have an inspection made of your entire system before you use it again.



Selecting Wood to Burn

One important factor in preventing creosote buildup is using only dry, seasoned wood. To be seasoned, wood must have been cut and dried six to twelve months or longer depending on the kind of wood. If you cut your own wood, cut well in advance of the time of use. Give the wood time to dry and become seasoned before use.

If you buy the wood, shop around and purchase the driest wood you can find. Dry wood looks and feels different than green wood. A stick of dry wood weighs less. The end of the stick may have cracks radiating from the center. Green wood does not have this appearance.

Remember that dry wood is not only safer to burn; it is also more economical because it produces more useable heat.

Chimney Cleaning

Chimney cleaning is a fact of life for the wood burner. If you burn wood, the formation of some creosote is unavoidable. Your chimney should be cleaned when creosote at any point reaches $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. The only way to tell when this point is reached is to inspect your chimney. How often you should conduct an inspection varies according to many factors. To begin, make your inspections fairly often. After a time, experience will tell you how often your flue needs to be inspected and cleaned. If you want to become your own chimney sweep. Start with the correct tools. Makeshift equipment may damage your chimney. For those who are not inclined to perform the inspection and cleaning chore themselves, professional chimney sweeps are available in most areas. Next to proper installation, proper cleaning is the most important wood stove fire safety rule.

Ashes

Dispose of ashes carefully. Place them in a metal container with a tight fitting lid. Set container only on a non-combustible surface, away from the house and/or garage.

Added Precautions

For the greatest measure of safety for yourself and your family, you should install one or more approved smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. Check them monthly to ensure they are in good working order.

- Each family should also practice a home fire escape plan/drill with two ways out of every room. Once **OUT** stay **OUT**.
- Family members need to establish a meeting place, a gathering point to ensure everyone is safely out of the house.
- Have a 3-foot “kid-free” zone around the wood burning stove and never leave small children in a room when a wood stove is in use.

The use of wood burning stoves brings into the home certain dangers associated with the use of wood fuel. These dangers can result in serious problems for the unsuspecting home owner.

Enjoy your wood heat. Remember that the use of wood fuel requires constant attention to safety practices.

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