

Fireplaces and Home Fire Safety

More than one-third of Americans use fireplaces, wood stoves and other fuel-fired appliances as primary heat sources in their homes. With the recent rise of fuel costs many people are going back to using wood fireplaces as their primary heating source. Unfortunately, many people are unaware of the fire risks when heating with wood and solid fuels.

Heating fires account for 36% of residential home fires in rural areas every year. Often these fires are due to creosote buildup in chimneys and stovepipes. All home heating systems require regular maintenance to function safely and efficiently.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA), Fremont County Emergency Management and your local fire departments encourage you to practice the following fire safety steps to keep those home fires safely burning. Remember, fire safety is your personal responsibility ...Fire Stops With You!

Keep Fireplaces and Wood Stoves Clean

- Have your chimney or wood stove inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney specialist.
- Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations and flammable materials.
- Always use a metal mesh screen with fireplaces.
- Keep air inlets on wood stoves open, and never restrict air supply to fireplaces. Otherwise you may cause creosote buildup that could lead to a chimney fire.
- Use fire-resistant materials on walls around wood stoves.

Safely Burn Fuels

- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Use seasoned hardwood. Soft, moist wood accelerates creosote buildup.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, trash or debris in your fireplace or wood stove.
- When building a fire, place logs at the rear of the fireplace on an adequate supporting grate.

Protect the Outside of Your Home

- Keep the roof clear of leaves, pine needles and other debris.
- Cover the chimney with a mesh screen spark arrester.
- Remove branches hanging above the chimney, flues or vents.

Protect the Inside of Your Home

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Consider installing the new long life smoke alarms.
- Provide proper venting systems for all heating equipment.
- Extend all vent pipes at least three feet above the roof.
- Sleep with your bedroom doors closed. A closed door can keep the extreme heat and smoke from a fire out of the room for up to an hour.
- Have a fire extinguisher readily available in both the kitchen and near your wood burning stove.

Protect Yourself

- Practice family evacuation plans, know where to meet outside of your residence.
- Learn and practice Stop, Drop & Roll.
- Make sure everyone knows how to call for emergency assistance (911).

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