

EFFICIENT BURNING TECHNIQUES



THE KEY IS TO BURN SMALL, HOT FIRES, USING HARDWOOD—THAT WILL MAXIMIZE HEAT OUTPUT.

KEEP FIRES BURNING HOT WITH FLAMES,

NOT SMOLDERING WITH A LOT OF SMOKE.

BE CAREFUL NOT TO ADD TOO MUCH FIREWOOD. IN A FIREPLACE, KEEP THE TOP OF THE FLAMES VISIBLE BELOW THE FIREPLACE OPENING. IN A WOODSTOVE, KEEP THE FLAMES CONFINED TO THE WOODSTOVE ITSELF.

WITH GLASS DOORS, KEEP THE DOORS WIDE OPEN WITH THE SCREEN CLOSED FOR A GOOD HALF HOUR AFTER STARTING THE FIRE. WHEN YOU SEE THE FIRE IS BURNING WELL, CLOSE THE DOORS AND SET ANY DRAFT CONTROLS.

IT'S BETTER TO ADD SMALLER LOADS MORE OFTEN THAN TO CRAM IN A LOT OF WOOD TRYING TO GET AN ALL-DAY BURN.

Warm up the flue

For fireplaces, warm up the flue by holding a piece of burning rolled-up newspaper in the (opened) damper region for 10-15 seconds. This helps the flue establish a good draft. Then light the tinder. Within a few minutes, you should have a nice, hot, roaring fire!

Important dos and don'ts

Do check the manufacturer's guidelines for your woodstove or insert.

Do use seasoned hardwood.

Do use commercial fire starters, if you like. They eliminate the need for tinder and reduce the amount of kindling required.

Don't use charcoal lighter fluid or other flammable liquids. These are extremely dangerous. (Gel fire starters are okay)

Don't use coal in a woodstove or fireplace unless there are specific written instructions—it will burn, but not safely.



Don't burn artificial logs in a woodstove, unless they are specifically designed for woodstove use.

Don't burn treated lumber, trash, or anything other than wood in your fireplace or woodstove.

TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS

SMOKE PROBLEMS

Is your damper open? If it is and the smoking continues, open a nearby window a crack for a minute or two until the fire is going well, then you can close it again.

If it just smokes when you light the fire, it may be because the flue is cold. Did you warm the flue with a burning rolled-up newspaper held in the damper region? (If not, that usually works)

If the chimney continues to smoke, call a certified chimney sweep. Your chimney may be clogged by animal nests or an accumulation of soot and creosote, or it may have additional problems.

CHIMNEY ODORS

The sour, sickly odor is the smell of creosote. The solution is to call a certified chimney sweep to clean your chimney and install a chimney cap to prevent water from entering and reacting with the creosote.

CREOSOTE BUILDUP

Slow smoldering fires and/or the use of unseasoned wood can create "cool" smoke and weak draft. Under these conditions the smoke condenses and sticks to the chimney's interior, forming highly flammable creosote.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A CHIMNEY FIRE

Get everyone out of the house and call the fire department. Don't close the damper. If you have a fireplace with glass doors, close the doors and the vents. If you have a woodstove, close the doors and the air inlets.

Call a certified chimney sweep before using it again. Even a small fire can damage the chimney, making it unsafe to use.



CREOSOTE IS THE MAIN CAUSE OF CHIMNEY FIRES

AVOIDING CHIMNEY FIRES

- ◆ Use seasoned woods only (dryness is more important than hard wood versus soft wood considerations).
- ◆ Never burn cardboard boxes, wrapping paper, trash or Christmas trees; these can spark a chimney fire.
- ◆ Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor flue temperatures where wood stoves are in use, so you can adjust burning practices as needed.
- ◆ Inspect and clean catalytic combustors on a regular basis, where applicable.



SIGNS THAT YOU'VE HAD A CHIMNEY FIRE

- Finding “puffy” creosote, with rainbow colored streaks, that has expanded beyond creosote’s normal form.
- Metal warp-age of the damper and/or smoke chamber connector pipe.
- Cracked or collapsed flue tile.
- Discolored or distorted chimney cap.
- Creosote flakes and pieces found on the roof or ground.
- Roofing material damaged from hot creosote.
- Cracks in exterior masonry.
- Evidence of smoke escaping through mortar joints of masonry or tile liners.