



## WOOD STOVE AND FIREPLACE SAFETY

With cooler weather approaching many people in our area will use wood heat to provide warmth in their home this winter. Fire District 27 would like to remind everyone that home fires are more prevalent in winter than in any other season. Every year the Fire Department responds to chimney fires resulting from a buildup of creosote and other unburned particles. A chimney fire can easily extend into an attic, ceiling or wall and cause extensive damage to a home. Before lighting the first fire of the season, there are a few important safety tips to remember.

### Wood Stove and Fireplace Safety Tips

#### PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

- Have your chimney inspected annually, and cleaned as necessary by a professional chimney sweep to ensure it's clear of obstructions, creosote and debris.
- A professional chimney inspector can detect cracks or defects that can lead to a structure fire.
- Install a cap at the top of the chimney to keep birds, squirrels and debris from entering.
- Repair a cap that is damaged or replace one that is missing.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home. ( replace your batteries when you turn the clocks back)
- Have a working fire extinguisher on hand.
- Make sure the area around the fireplace or woodstove is clear of furniture, books, newspapers and other combustible materials.



#### COMMON SENSE PRACTICES

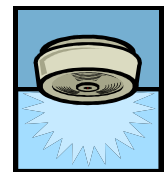
- Keep small children and pets away from the wood stove or fireplace.
- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Never leave the fire unattended.
- Make sure the fire is completely out before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Never burn plastic items or garbage in your fireplace; they may give off toxic chemicals in the smoke.
- When cleaning ashes out of a fireplace, place them in a metal bucket, soak them with water and place it outside away from buildings. Embers can remain hot for days.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

#### LIGHTING A FIRE

- Burn only dry seasoned wood or manufactured logs; wet or green firewood will create a smoldering fire which contributes to creosote buildup.
- Use a safety screen or glass doors for protection from embers.
- Small fires generate less smoke, thus less creosote buildup. Also, a fire that is too large or too hot can crack the chimney.
- Place logs at the rear of the fireplace on an adequate supporting grate.
- Clean the fire box at least once a week during the months that you use it when ash builds up; leave about 1 inch of ash because it acts as insulation, allowing the coals to heat faster and retain heat easier.
- **Chimney Fires** - which can be caused by creosote build up, can easily extend into an attic, ceiling or wall and cause extensive damage. A loud roar, sucking sounds, shaking pipes, hot spots on wall or chimney, or smoke in the home. If you hear or see any of these signs, shut off the air supply to the fireplace or wood stove, get everyone out of the house quickly, and call 911 from a neighbors house or your cell phone.

- Modern air-tight home construction can cause a fireplace to have difficulty breathing. As a fire burns, it requires a flow of air to sustain the fire, and allow the thermal column to take the dangerous products of combustion up the chimney. A common way to supply an outside source of air is to keep a window slightly open near the fireplace.
- If you choose to heat with wood, opt for an EPA-certified wood stove or wood-burning fireplace insert. They burn about 60 percent cleaner than older uncertified stoves or fireplaces. Pellet stoves are an efficient and affordable alternative to wood-burning as well.
- **Watch your chimney smoke.** Generating excessive smoke is not only un-neighborly, it's illegal. Under state regulations, smoke from your chimney should not exceed 20 percent opacity.
- When **Puget Sound Clean Air Agency** declares a Stage 1 Burn Ban, it is unlawful to use your fireplace or uncertified wood stove, unless this is your only source of adequate heat. During Stage 2 Burn Bans it is also unlawful to use pellet stoves and certified wood stoves. For more information go to [www.pscleanair.org](http://www.pscleanair.org)



**Remember to test your smoke alarms monthly.**