

What's the Risk?

Keep Woodstoves & Fireplaces in Good Working Order



THE ISSUE

Some homeowners believe their woodstove or fireplace is a good heat source backup if they lose power during a winter storm. However, if it is not used for an extended period, they may be in for an unfortunate surprise.

A common issue identified during residential insurance-based risk assessments is the presence of an unused solid-fuel-burning appliance or fireplace. When a solid-fuel-burning device such as a wood, pellet or coal stove, fireplace or fireplace insert is not used for a long time, the venting system (chimney) and the appliance can deteriorate and not work properly.



WHAT'S THE RISK?

All solid-fuel-burning appliances rely on venting to ensure smoke exits the house. The most common vent is a chimney although some new solid-fuel appliances are power vented using an electric motor and blower system. Homeowners who only use a solid-fuel-heating device as backup heating may forget that the venting system needs to be checked annually to ensure the system will operate safely and efficiently. Chimneys and other venting systems that are not maintained can lead to fires and smoke damage.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Homeowners should take the following steps to ensure their solid-fuel-appliance system is safe and will operate effectively.

- Hire a professional chimney sweep to inspect the venting system every fall to make certain it has not deteriorated or been blocked by an animal or bird's nest.
- Have a Wood Energy Technology Transfer (WETT) certified individual inspect the appliance to ensure it is functioning correctly.
- When using the appliance after an extended period of inactivity, light a small fire to ensure there are no problems with the device or the venting system. Ensure you have a fire extinguisher nearby and that you know how to use it.
- Be sure to move all furniture, household items and combustibles away from the device prior to lighting to avoid unintended fire or heat damage.

