

What's the Risk?

Chimney Fires



THE ISSUE

Chimney fires are a significant life safety and property loss concern. These fires occur when flammable creosote deposits, a byproduct of burning solid fuel (wood, wood pellets, or coal) build up inside the chimney and ignite. Homeowners who do not maintain their fireplace or wood-burning stove chimneys run the risk of suffering a chimney fire which can damage the chimney itself, or in the worst-case scenario, lead to the complete loss of their home.



WHAT'S THE RISK?

Chimneys are complex safety structures which enable dangerous and deadly flue gases and products of combustion to be safely vented to the outside. Chimney fires can rapidly spread through the chimney and potentially engulf the entire structure. Creosote can accumulate on the inner walls of the chimney over time especially if firewood is not properly seasoned (at least 2 years old) or if the chimney is not adequately maintained.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The following are some key actions that can be taken to address the risk of chimney fires:

- Schedule annual chimney inspections by a certified professional.
- Ensure the chimney is cleaned regularly during the heating season to remove creosote buildup.
- Consider using insulated chimney liners which can reduce creosote buildup.
- Burn only dry, well-seasoned wood.
- Avoid burning treated or painted wood.
- Keep the damper or air inlet fully open when the fire is burning to ensure proper venting.
- Be on the alert for signs of a chimney fire, such as unusual noises, smoke, or a strong odour.
- Never leave a fire unattended, and ensure it is fully extinguished before leaving.

