

Winter Safety Tips

Winter is fast approaching and the heating season will soon be here if it isn't already where you are. While heating with wood is a great way to supplement your main heating system, it's very important to maintain your stove to keep it operating efficiently and safely.

It's recommended to have your stove and chimneys inspected and cleaned at least once a year by a licensed and insured chimney sweep who will look for cracks, leaks, warping and creosote buildup. Try to get this done before you start to use your stove this fall, as birds and other animals may have found a way to get into the chimney and/or stove and make a nest.

Be careful what you burn. Most stoves are meant to burn wood, coal or pellets only. Burning things like trash, treated wood, and products containing plastic or metals may actually damage your stove and emit harmful gases. Try to burn only dry, seasoned wood to get the maximum heat release, best efficiency, and to lessen creosote buildup.

Clearances to combustibles

Make sure your stove meets all the installation requirements for your particular model. Most stoves that are UL listed will have specific minimum distances to combustibles listed in the owner's manual. It is recommended that the noncombustible floor protection under the stove extends out at least 18 inches from all sides of the stove. Keep all furniture, drapes and such at least 36 inches from the stove and never pile firewood up next to it.

One last item to help keep you safe is to check your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors at least twice a year for proper operation. A general rule of thumb is that if the detector is over 10 years old, it is time to replace it.

Have a safe and warm winter!