



# The Office of Fire Safety and Injury Prevention Education

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## Home Heating Safety Fireplaces and Wood Stoves

More than one-third of Americans use fireplaces, wood stoves and other fuel-fired appliances as primary heat sources in their homes. Unfortunately, many people are unaware of the fire risks when heating with wood and other fuels.

Heating fires account for 36% of residential home fires every year. Often these fires are due to creosote buildup in chimneys and stovepipes. All home heating systems require regular maintenance to function safely and efficiently.

### *Steps To Keep Those Home Fires Burning Safely...*

#### **KEEP FIREPLACES AND WOOD STOVES CLEAN**

- Have your chimney or wood stove inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney specialist.
- Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations and flammable materials.
- Always use a metal mesh screen with fireplaces. Leave glass doors open while burning a fire.
- Keep air inlets on wood stoves open, and never restrict air supply to fireplaces. Otherwise you may cause creosote buildup that could lead to a chimney fire.
- Use fire-resistant materials on walls around wood stoves.

#### **SAFELY BURNING WOOD IN A FIREPLACE**

- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire
- Use only seasoned hardwood. Soft, moist wood accelerates creosote buildup.
- Build small fires that burn completely and produce less smoke.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, trash or debris.
- Use an adequate support grate for wood.
- Never leave fireplaces unattended. Extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Soak hot ashes in water and place them in a metal container outside of your home.



#### **PROTECT YOU AND YOUR HOME**

- Cover chimney with a mesh screen spark arrester.
- Remove branches hanging above the chimney, flues or vents.
- Extend all vent pipes at least three feet above the roof.

**Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.**

***Fact Sheet***