

Malta McConnellsville Fire Department

How to Prevent a Chimney Fire

Have your chimney inspected by a professional chimney sweep or woodstove-fireplace installer. Failing to maintain your woodstove or fireplace properly can lead to a chimney fire. Chimney fires occur when combustible deposits on the inner walls of the chimney ignite. These combustible deposits, called "creosote," are a natural byproduct of wood burning. A fire hazard exists if 1/4 inch of creosote (or more) coats the inner walls of the chimney.

Chimney fires do not occur in clean, intact, properly installed chimneys. Have a professional chimney sweep clean and inspect your appliance at least once a year. More frequent cleanings may be required, based on the type of wood burned, the type of appliance, and the frequency of use. In general, an older, uncertified woodstove, or any appliance that is used frequently, will require more than one cleaning per year.

Detection. The first indication of a chimney fire is usually the noise--a roaring sound that grows louder as the fire's intensity increases. Clouds of black smoke and sparks will be seen exiting the top of the chimney; in severe fires, flames can extend several feet about the chimney.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO AVOID CHIMNEY FIRES:

- ✓ Burn well-seasoned hardwoods.
- ✓ Build smaller, hotter fires that burn more completely and produce less smoke.
- ✓ Never burn cardboard boxes, wrapping paper, trash or Christmas trees; these can spark a chimney fire.
- ✓ Have the chimney inspected and cleaned on a regular basis.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A CHIMNEY FIRE:

1. Get everyone out of the house, including you.
2. Call the Fire Department