



## HOMEOWNER TIPS

### Six Chimney Safety Tips: Reduce The Risk Of Fire

The crackle of a warm fire in the winter months can be a welcome relief from cold temperatures, and proper chimney and fireplace maintenance is key to enjoying a safe, cozy fire. Thousands of chimney fires occur every year, often resulting in costly damage that can be easily avoided. To make sure that your home is safe and ready for winter fireplace use, follow these guidelines:

- > Schedule a professional chimney sweeping and inspection before the weather gets cold. This will ensure that your chimney is free from creosote deposits, which can be combustible. A proper inspection will also detect any damage or repairs that need to be made.
- > Consider placing a metal screen in front of your fireplace, or installing glass fireplace doors. This will help prevent accidental fires, in the event that hot sparks or embers in your fireplace happened to escape.
- > If you have issues with debris or animals entering your chimney, you may want to consider installing a chimney cap. A cap with wire mesh prevents animal entry, and also helps prevent embers or sparks from escaping, which can reduce the risk of rooftop fires.
- > Inspect the chimney's masonry. Mortar can wear away over time, and when it is cracked or flaking, moisture can get into the chimney system. Make repairs as needed to avoid further chimney damage resulting from moisture exposure and freezing temperatures.
- > Consider waterproofing your chimney. Some professionals recommend applying a waterproof seal to the chimney's exterior. This can further prevent moisture from entering the chimney and causing damage.
- > Keep flammable items away from the area around the fireplace. Clear the area around the hearth, and be sure to move away furniture, curtains and carpet, if possible. During the holidays, be sure that flammable decorations are not placed near the fireplace. Generally speaking, it is best to keep a three-foot clearance space between the fireplace and a holiday tree, gifts or other decorations.

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