

# Chimney & Woodstove *Fire Safety*



*Every year, there are hundreds of fire incidents involving chimneys, fireplaces and woodstoves in Massachusetts. The fires result in deaths, injuries and millions of dollars in property losses. Learn how to prevent chimney, fireplace and woodstove fires.*

## **Purchasing**

Be sure the stove you are purchasing to burn wood or coal is approved by Underwriter's Laboratory or another recognized testing laboratory.

## **Installation**

- You must have a building permit before installing a fireplace, wood or coal burning stove. They must be inspected by the local building inspector prior to their initial use as required by the Massachusetts State Building Code.
- Allow at least 36 inches of space around the appliance to prevent combustibles from coming into contact with a heat source.

Carbon monoxide alarms  
are required in all  
homes with chimneys  
or woodstoves.

- Solid fuel heating appliances cannot share a common flue with chimney flues used by other solid fuel, fossil fuel, or gas-fired appliances.

## **Inspections**

Have the chimney and flue inspected by a qualified mason prior to use. Cracks in the flue or mortar joints can allow flames and heated gases to escape into the structure.

## **Proper Use**

- Most chimney fires occur due to a build-up of **creosote**, a tarry by-product of burning wood. Have your chimney flue cleaned before each heating season. Burn only dry, well-seasoned, hardwood to reduce creosote accumulation.
- Do not use flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Never leave children unattended near a stove or fireplace.
- Before lighting a fire, check that the damper is open. Failure to do so can

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result in an accumulation of smoke and carbon monoxide within the home. Do not close a damper before the fire has died out and the embers are cold.

- Use a fireplace screen to prevent flying sparks and embers from falling out onto the floor.
- Install and maintain smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to protect your family.

### **Proper Ash Disposal**

Ashes cleaned out from a stove or fireplace should be shoveled into a metal bucket with a metal lid, and placed outside, on the ground, away from the building, to prevent fires. Do not place ashes into a paper bag or cardboard box. Ashes and embers can stay hot for days and ignite combustibles.

### **Carbon Monoxide and Smoke Alarms**

- Carbon monoxide alarms are required in all homes with chimneys or woodstoves. Install one on every habitable level



and no more than 10 feet from every bedroom door. Replace alarms every 5-7 years.

- Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home, at the bottom of every stairwell and outside each sleeping area. Replace every ten years.
- Test alarms regularly and change alkaline batteries when you change the clocks.
- If you have battery-operated smoke alarms, replace them with new sealed, 10-year battery alarms.



# **KEEP WARM KEEP SAFE**

**Winter Home Heating Safety**  
**Mantenerse Caliente, Mantenerse Seguro**