



wildsight golden

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For Immediate Release

How to Prevent Chimney Fires and Reduce Air Pollution in Golden

December 18

Dirty chimneys can cause chimney fires, which will damage and potentially destroy homes and injure or kill people. When a chimney catches fire, flames or dense smoke may shoot from the top, explosive and/or low rumbling noises may be heard.

However, those are only the chimney fires you know about. Some are slow-burning since they don't get enough air or fuel to be as dramatic or visible. Temperatures reached can still be very high and cause as much damage to the chimney structure and nearby combustible parts of the house.

What is Creosote?

Creosote is black or brown residue that sticks to the inner walls of chimneys. It can be crusty and flaky, tar-like, drippy and sticky or shiny and hardened. Creosote is highly combustible. If it builds up in sufficient quantities it can catch fire inside the chimney flue. Any amount of creosote can burn, however there is cause for concern when it builds up in sufficient quantities to sustain a long, hot, destructive chimney fire.

Conditions that encourage the build-up of creosote:

1. **Poor Air Supply:** A wood stove's air supply can be limited by closing down the stove damper or air inlets too soon and too much, and by improperly using the stovepipe damper to restrict air movement.
2. **Burning unseasoned firewood:** Burning green wood produces a lot of smoke.
3. **Cool flue temperatures:** Fully-packed wood stoves that are damped down too much will burn longer but will smoulder and lead to creosote build-up. Smoke is

also essentially wasted wood that is not heating your home. Exterior chimneys build up creosote faster than one that runs through the centre of a house.

The good news is, with proper care, chimney fires are entirely preventable.

Use Good Burning Practices

- ✓ Only use seasoned fire wood with less than 20% moisture.
- ✓ Build smaller, hotter fires that burn more completely and produce little smoke.
- ✓ Never burn cardboard boxes, wrapping paper, garbage or Christmas trees. These items can spark a chimney fire.
- ✓ Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor flue temperatures where wood stoves are in use, so you can adjust burning practices as needed.

Chimney Maintenance

- Have the chimney inspected and cleaned on a regular basis. Your chimney could have a problem you cannot see. Consult a Wood Energy Technical Training (WETT) certified chimney sweep.
- Carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions for installing and maintaining your chimney or appliance. For all new installations, a Building Permit from the Town of Golden is required.
- Your heating appliance, flue pipes and chimney can deteriorate over time. Look for corrosion or rust stains on the outer shell of a metal chimney and check for bulges or corrosion in its liner.
- Check walls for excessive heat. If a wall is very hot, it could be a sign of improper installation of the chimney or stove pipe.
- Watch for smoke coming into the room. This could indicate a blockage in the chimney or a faulty damper control mechanism.

What to do if you have a chimney fire

- Get everyone, including yourself, out of the house.
- Call the fire department.

If you can do so without risk to yourself, these additional steps may help save your home.

- Put a flare type chimney fire extinguisher into the fireplace or wood stove.
- Close air inlets on a wood stove or glass doors on a fireplace.
- Use a garden hose to spray down the roof (not the chimney) so the fire won't spread to the rest of the structure.
- Monitor the exterior chimney temperature throughout the house for at least two or three hours after the fire is out.

If you think a chimney fire has occurred, call a chimney sweep for professional evaluation. They will be able to make recommendations about how to bring the system back up to safety standards.

Reference: Town of Georgina Fire Department

<http://www.georgina.ca/fire/pedChimney.asp>

For more information about the wood stove exchange rebates, air quality issues, or to find out how to join the Golden and District Air Quality Committee, please see

<https://wildsight.ca/branches/golden/air-quality/>.

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