

Chimney and Flue Fires

Over time, ash and soot can build up on the inside of your flue or chimney. If it's not cleaned out, the build-up can ignite causing a chimney or flue fire where flames shoot out of the top of the chimney.

As these substances exit the fireplace or wood stove, and flow up into the relatively cooler chimney or flue, condensation occurs. The resulting residue that sticks to the inner walls of the chimney or flue is called creosote. Creosote is black or brown in appearance. It can be crusty and flaky ... tar-like, drippy and sticky ... or shiny and hardened. Often, all forms will occur in one chimney system.

Whatever form it takes, creosote is highly combustible. If it builds up in sufficient quantities - and catches fire inside the chimney or flue- the result will be a chimney or flue fire. Although any amount of creosote can burn, sweeps are concerned when creosote builds up in sufficient quantities to sustain a long, hot, destructive chimney fire.



Certain conditions encourage the buildup of creosote, restricted air supply, unseasoned wood and cooler-than-normal chimney/flue temperatures are all factors that can accelerate the buildup of creosote on chimney/flue walls.



Before you use your flued heater or fire each year, check the brickwork in the fireplace for cracks where fire can creep through. Also check the chimney or metal flue to make sure they are clean and have no visible cracks.

To help reduce the build up of residue in your chimney or flue;

- Clean your flu or chimney at least once a year to prevent a build up of flammable material and ensure your heater works efficiently.
 - Keep flammables like clothes, curtains and furniture at least one metre from heating appliances.
 - Always use a fire screen in front of open fireplaces to prevent sparks and logs rolling out.
- Extinguish all flames and embers completely before going to bed or leaving the house.
 - When disposing of ash, ensure it is completely cool and no embers remain.
 - Buy a fire blanket and extinguisher and learn how to use them.

**A Clean chimney will not catch fire.
Get regular inspections and cleanings as needed.**