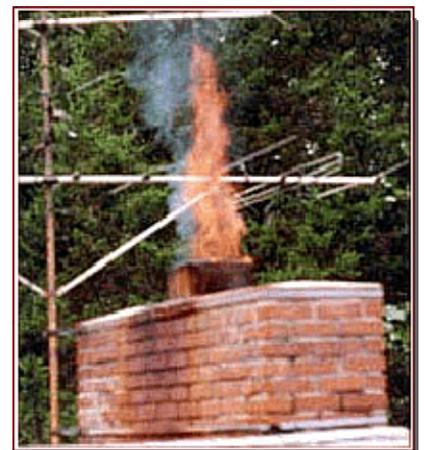




10 Tips on Maintaining Your Fireplace

There can be many advantages to using a wood-burning fireplace. Among other things, it can save money on heating costs and supplement your main source of heat. Here are 10 tips for wood-burning fireplace maintenance.

1. Have your wood-burning fireplace inspected and cleaned by a professional chimney sweep at least once a year and more often if creosote builds up on the chimney walls rapidly.
2. Between professional inspections and cleanings, monitor your wood-burning fireplace for signs of buildup or other problems.
3. Your chimney has a cap with open sides (usually covered with mesh) to keep out rain, birds, squirrels and other animals, and other debris from entering the chimney. The cap should be inspected regularly and replaced when necessary.
4. Check the interior of your wood-burning fireplace's chimney for creosote buildup. Creosote is a dark colored or black substance that can accumulate if wood isn't burning completely. It is flammable and, therefore, a buildup of creosote is a fire hazard and should be cleaned away with a creosote remover as soon as possible.
5. Also watch for soot buildup in the chimney of your wood-burning fireplace. Soot is softer than creosote, flammable and should be cleaned out of the chimney regularly.



6. If possible, burn hardwoods like maple, oak, ash and birch. The advantages of hardwoods are that they burn hot and long; have less pitch and sap, making them cleaner to handle; and tend to cause less creosote buildup. On the other hand, they generally are more expensive than softwoods.
7. Troubleshoot anytime there is smoke indoors from your wood-burning fireplace and immediately correct any problems that you find. Possible causes of smoke are a dirty chimney with creosote or soot buildup, other debris in the chimney, a damper that isn't open or is only partly open and wood that is not burning completely.
8. To ensure wood-burning fireplace safety, consider installing a stainless steel liner that will withstand even the highest temperatures and will keep the fire and its embers contained.
9. Also, to improve your wood-burning fireplace's efficiency, consider installing heat-proof glass doors to protect against heat loss and a fan or blower to direct the heat into the room. Doors also are a safety feature, since they can keep live embers from escaping the fireplace into the interior of the home. Glass doors should be cleaned regularly with a paper towel and glass fireplace door cleaner.
10. Clean your wood-burning fireplace's interior including its floor regularly. Sweep out or vacuum up cold ashes. Wear a dust mask and gloves when cleaning the fireplace.