

Check Out your Wood Burning Appliances

It can be comforting to curl up beside a crackling fire or gather around the warmth of a wood stove on a cold winter night especially during the holiday season. Take the necessary steps now to ensure that wood stoves and fireplaces are operating properly and to eliminate potential hazards.

The Ontario Fire Code requires homeowners to maintain their heating appliances in safe operating condition. This includes inspecting chimneys at least once a year.

Inspection Checklist

- **Check stovepipes and connections**
Ensure screws are located at every joint and that each connection is a tight secure fit. Look for sign of dark staining or white powder (also referred to as leeching) at every joint. Rust is a clear sign that it is time to replace the stovepipe.
- **Check for creosote**
Creosote is a byproduct of combustion that can form quickly on the interior walls of the chimney. It is a major cause of chimney fires so it should never be allowed to build up.
- **Check walls for excessive heat**
If the wall above your fireplace or wood stove gets very hot, it could be a sign of improper chimney installation and a potential fire hazard.
- **Protect walls and floors from heat and sparks**
Keep combustible objects away from your wood stove or fireplace and always use a properly fitted screen to cover the fireplace opening. Floors and walls should be protected with noncombustible shields.
- **Install a rain cap**
A rain cap on top of your metal or masonry chimney will prevent moisture from getting inside and causing rust and corrosion. If the cap has a spark screen, inspect it regularly for blockages.
- **Watch for the warning signs**
Look for corrosion or rust on the outer shell of a metal chimney. Watch for bulges or corrosion of the liner as well. Loose bricks, crumbling mortar, dark stains and white powder all indicate problems with a masonry chimney. They should be attended to by a qualified contractor or mason.
- **When in doubt, call an expert!**
Perhaps the safest and most practical way to handle the annual maintenance of your chimney, wood stove and fireplace is to contact a WETT* Certified Chimney Sweep. It is a relatively small investment that could pay big safety dividends.

* Wood Energy Technical Training