

# Safety Sense

*Warm, Cozy and Safe*



There's nothing that says "wintertime" like snuggling in front of a warm cozy fireplace. Enjoying a cup of cocoa on a wintry night with a roaring fireplace brings a sense of calm and peacefulness, but all of that serenity can be shattered if you have not taken precautions to assure your fireplace is in optimal working condition and properly maintained throughout the season. Hopefully, you have already prepped your fireplace, but if you're still getting winter ready, please:

- Have your fireplace professional inspected every year and, if needed, have the chimney cleaned.
- Check the exterior chimney for cracks and damaged bricks and have a professional mason do repairs.
- Inspect the chimney cap and damper to assure there is nothing preventing it from opening and closing.
- Remove old ashes and debris before your start your wood fireplace and make certain to regularly clean out the firebox to prevent buildup.
  - For the best and safest fires, use dry, seasoned wood that'll reduce the risk of creosote buildup. And do NOT burn household trash, treated wood, paper, or cardboard in your fireplace.
- If you have a gas fireplace, clean the interior and exterior glass doors and wipe down all interior surface areas to remove dust and cobwebs from the logs, burners, and the pilot light.
  - The glass doors should be cleaned with a fireplace-approved cleaning product and if the glass is damaged in any way, replace it before you start it up.
- For a gas fireplace, your final step is testing the ignition and pilot light to make sure they are functioning properly and scheduling an appointment for repairs if they're not.

If you diligently follow these fireplace preparation steps, it'll be ready to ignite on those chilly nights (and days). Of course, you have to continually maintain your fireplace throughout the winter season, like always cleaning out the old ashes and regularly checking the glass fireplace doors for cracks. Other helpful safety tips:

- ALWAYS extinguish a wood burning fire before leaving the house or going to bed. Never leave a fire unattended.
- Keep a fire blanket or extinguisher nearby for any unforeseen issues.
- If you don't already have carbon monoxide detectors, get them and place them on every floor in your home (and at least 15' from the fireplace) to alert you of carbon monoxide poisoning levels.
- Make sure your smoke detectors are in good working order with new batteries.

Prioritize your safety and the safety of everyone in your home by following these steps. Then kick back and enjoy a warm and safe winter in front of your fireplace.

(Guidelines provided by the National Fire Protection Association.)

