

Chimney Fires

A wood fire is something that can be enjoyed on a cold winter night. This is the time of year when we are called for chimney fires. Chimney fires are no fun, and we're sure you don't want to experience one on your own.

Like any fires, chimney fires vary in size and severity. On one extreme, it is possible to have a chimney fire without even knowing it. While this is uncommon, it does happen. On the other extreme, a chimney fire may leave nothing more of your home than a pile of ashes around the chimney.

The average chimney fire will make a loud roaring noise, often described by people as a train or jet going through the home. The roaring noise is caused by the sudden rush of air going into the chimney to feed the fire. Flames will usually be seen coming out of the chimney. Pieces of creosote will often be seen flying out the top of the chimney, and these may ignite the roof or other nearby combustibles. You could also hear popping or cracking noises inside the chimney indicating damage to bricks, mortar and the flue liners.

The items below are the things you should do if you have a chimney fire:

If a chimney fire does occur, in all cases call the Fire Department (911) immediately. Call the Fire Department from a neighbor's house. "It is best to leave the fighting of fire to the Fire Department.

If you have a fireplace with glass doors, close the doors and vents.

If you have a wood stove, close the doors and the air inlets.

Do not close the damper of either a wood stove or a fireplace.

Call a chimney sweep before using the chimney again. Check your yellow pages in the phone book. Don't be misled into believing that a chimney fire is a good way to clean a chimney. A chimney fire is a serious occurrence and can be very damaging to a chimney.

Other safety tips that can help you enjoy your fireplace or wood stove:

Never use flammable liquids or excessive amounts of paper to start a fire.

Never leave a fire unattended.

Keep children away from the heat sources.

Always keep a metal or glass screen in front of the fireplace opening.

Burn small, hot fires to cut down on creosote build-up in the chimney.

Deposit all ashes in a metal container with a lid.

Never hang clothes to dry too close to a wood-burning stove.

Check your smoke detectors.

Install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector near rooms where people sleep.

Have a portable fire extinguisher (ABC) close at hand.

It's the season to enjoy your wood-burning stove and fireplace, but it is up to you to use and maintain your equipment.

**Chief Roger Williams
Mayville Fire Department**