

Fireplace Safety

There's nothing as cozy as a warm, crackling fire in the fireplace. But without using some simple safety precautions, that fire could turn deadly. Most of these injuries happened to children under five years of age.

House fires can start in fireplaces because of:

- an overloaded fire such as too much wood, paper, etc
- damage to the fireplace such as missing bricks
- blocked chimney flues
- flying sparks
- items too close to the fireplace catch fire, such as curtains, furniture, etc.

Keep your family safe and warm by following these fireplace safety tips:

- Inspect the fireplace.
- Make sure the protective linings and smoke ducts are clean and in good condition.
- Check to see that the chimney is clear and in good repair.
- If you are installing a factory-made fireplace, it should not be located near any materials that can catch fire easily.
- Have it checked and cleaned as necessary, by a CSIA (Chimney Safety Institute of America) Certified Chimney Sweep. This reduces the risk of fires and carbon monoxide poisonings due to buildup or blockages in the chimneys. To locate a certified sweep, visit the CSIA Web site at www.csia.org. A certified sweep can also perform maintenance on your wood stove or help remove gas logs from a fireplace.
- Keep the top of chimneys clear of tree limbs or debris.
- Install a chimney cap to keep debris and animals out of the chimney.
- Always open the damper before lighting the fire and keep it open until the ashes are cool. This will help prevent the build-up of poisonous gases, such as carbon monoxide.
- Fuel the fire safely. For burning firewood in wood stoves or fireplaces, choose well-seasoned wood that has been dried for at least six months to a year and stored properly.
- Build it right. Place firewood or fire logs in the back of the fireplace on a sturdy grate.
- To start the fire, use a fire lighter.
- Never use gasoline, charcoal lighter or other fuel to light or re-light a fire because the vapors can explode.
- Never keep flammable fuels near a fire. Vapors can travel the length of a room and explode.
- Do not use coal or charcoal in a fireplace because of the danger of carbon monoxide.
- Do not burn trash or gift wrap in the fireplace because certain plastics, foam rubber and other coated materials can cause deadly fumes. Flying sparks could also allow the roof to catch fire.
- Artificial logs are very different from wood logs! Artificial logs are usually made of sawdust and wax and can burn differently. Be sure to read the instructions on the logs and follow them carefully. Use one log at a time and do not add another log until the fire is

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completely out. Never add an artificial log to a natural wood fire that is already burning. Wait at least two hours before adding an artificial log to a natural log fire because it could cause a flare-up.

- Do not poke artificial logs because the flaming wax could stick to the poker and drop onto the floor or carpet. Poking a log could also cause a flare-up.
- Home rolled newspaper logs should never be soaked in flammable fuels of any kind because of the severe danger of explosion. Soaking the newspaper in water either before rolling or during rolling removes the clay and can provide a better burning log. Stack the logs on end and let them dry for two weeks. When lighting the newspaper logs, use kindling just as you would for a regular fire.
- Do not overload the fireplace. Large fires can lead to overheating of a wall or roof, especially if the fireplace is made of metal.
- Always use a screen around the fireplace to keep sparks from flying out and to protect children and adults.
- Warn children about the danger of fire.
- Do not let them play with fire.
- Keep items such as carpets, pillows, furniture or papers away from the fireplace area.
- At holiday time, make sure the Christmas tree is not close enough to catch fire.
- Always make sure that the fire is completely out before going to bed for the night or when leaving the house.