

# FIREPLACE SAFETY



**W**oodburning and gas fireplaces are designed to safely provide years of comfort, warmth and relaxation. To ensure they can do their job, fireplaces require maintenance and proper operation. Before lighting the first fire of the season, there are a few important fireplace safety tips to remember.

## WOODBURNING FIREPLACE SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE TIPS

### PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

- ▶ Have the chimney inspected annually, and cleaned as necessary, by a professional chimney sweep to ensure it's clear of obstructions and creosote.
- ▶ Have a cap installed at the top of the chimney to avoid the possibility that debris or animals can block the chimney.
- ▶ Install both a smoke and carbon monoxide detector. (Make sure the batteries work.)
- ▶ Keep a fire extinguisher on hand.
- ▶ Make sure the area around the fireplace is clear of furniture, books, newspapers and other potentially flammable materials. (Two feet away is a good rule.)

### LIGHTING FIRE

- ▶ Clean out ashes from previous fires. Open the damper.
- ▶ Use a fireplace grate.
- ▶ Keep glass doors open during the fire.
- ▶ Use fireplace tools to tend the fire.
- ▶ Build a safe fire.
- ▶ Always close the firescreen when in use.



### USING COMMON SENSE

- ▶ Never burn garbage, rolled newspapers, charcoal or plastic in the fireplace.
- ▶ Never use gasoline or any liquid accelerant to help start a fire.
- ▶ Keep small children and pets away from the fireplace.
- ▶ Never leave a fire unattended.
- ▶ Don't close the damper until the embers have completely stopped burning.
- ▶ Make sure the fire is completely out before going to bed or leaving the house.
- ▶ When cleaning the fireplace, store ashes in a non-combustible container with a tightly fitting lid and place the container away from the house.
- ▶ Never burn a Christmas tree in the fireplace.

### STARTING A SAFE FIRE

Creating a perfect fire starts with using seasoned firewood cut to the correct length. To start a safe fire, crumple paper on the grate within the fireplace and cover it with kindling or a manufactured firestarter. Open the fireplace damper fully and light the paper. Once the kindling or the firestarter is burning brightly, add dry seasoned wood to the fire and shut the firescreen. It's important to avoid overloading the fireplace so the firewood doesn't tumble out. A couple of logs will suffice. Burning a manufactured firelog purchased from the grocery or hardware store is a good alternative to firewood, and does not require paper to get the fire started.

Additional Fireplace Safety Tips on reverse side →

# ADDITIONAL FIREPLACE SAFETY TIPS

## ROLE OF CHIMNEY SWEEPING

Chimney upkeep is complicated by the fact that many problems (cracks, faults, and structural damage) are not visible from the outside. To ensure chimney safety, the best course of action is to have a professional chimney sweep, certified by the Chimney Safety Institute of America (CSIA), perform an annual inspection and clean the chimney as necessary. Chimney sweeps remove creosote and obstructions, such as leaves, branches or bird's nests, and look for other problems within the system.

## GAS FIREPLACE SAFETY MAINTENANCE TIPS

Gas fireplaces also require routine maintenance and service to ensure their proper working order. The best person to perform the service is a specialty retailer who is trained in the maintenance of gas fireplaces. A retailer will complete the following type of tasks when performing service on a gas fireplace:

- ▶ Adjust millivolt output.
- ▶ Clean and adjust the glowing embers and logs for best appearance.
- ▶ Clean the fan and related air circulation passages.
- ▶ Clean the glass.
- ▶ Check the batteries in the carbon monoxide detector.
- ▶ Ensure the vents are unobstructed and able to do their job.

## HEARTH RETAILERS ARE AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE

All hearth products, not just fireplaces, need to be maintained and operated properly in order to function safely and perform at their best. To fully understand the necessary steps involved in proper operation, read the manufacturer's instruction manual for the hearth product and consult with a local specialty retailer for input and guidance. ***A specialty retailer is an important resource. To locate a specialty retailer, go to [www.hpba.org](http://www.hpba.org).***

## GAS FIREPLACE SAFETY MAINTENANCE TIPS

Professional installation by a qualified technician is essential to the proper performance and safety of a hearth product and its venting system. Unlike a malfunctioning refrigerator, a hearth product that doesn't do its job properly can have serious consequences. Many specialty retailers offer installation by factory-trained and/or nationally certified staff. To verify if an installer is certified, contact the National Fireplace Institute (NFI) at [www.nficertified.org](http://www.nficertified.org), or to verify factory training, use the hearth product manufacturer directory at [www.hpba.org](http://www.hpba.org) for contact information.

