

WOODSTOVE SAFETY TIPS



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The weather outside may be frightful, but for those with the right heating sources, the temperature inside is perfect. Homeowners looking to stay warm and cozy during the colder months are using alternatives to their heating systems, such as fireplaces, pellet stoves or wood stoves. Each has its benefits and can do an excellent job of serving as a supplementary heat source. If they are installed, maintained and operated properly, properties can enjoy years of warmth provided safely and efficiently. As with any other home system, alternative heat sources do require a certain amount of upkeep for their continued operation and your continued safety.

Types of Wood Stoves

Wood stoves are a great source of supplemental heat, as they are generally more efficient at producing heat than a fireplace. There are many types and styles of wood stoves, but most wood stoves can be categorized as either freestanding or an insert. A **wood stove insert** fits into the fireplace opening and vents through the chimney. Many come equipped with an electric-powered blower to help circulate the heat. **Freestanding wood stoves** stand separately. In some cases, wood-burning stoves may share the flue of an existing fireplace; in other cases, they may vent into a separate chimney built to accommodate the stove.

Using the Wood Stove

If adding an insert, have your chimney inspected to determine if it can be used with a wood stove. Because a wood stove generates very hot combustion gases, its chimney must be either masonry (with flue tiles intact and in good condition) or manufactured specifically for burning wood.

If you have a freestanding wood stove, make sure it is located as close to the chimney as possible to limit the length of the flue pipe (or chimney connector). Single-walled flue pipes will get extremely hot while in use. A freestanding wood stove should never be installed on a combustible surface, such as a wood floor, and should not be connected to a chimney flue that serves another appliance (eg. a furnace, boiler or stove).

Finally, be sure the wood burning stove is manufactured and installed to modern standards, and that it carries a certification label from Underwriters Laboratories, Canadian Standards Association, or similar testing organizations. If it is a new stove, arranging for a professional installation is always advisable. An inspection is a good idea if you have moved into a property with a wood burning stove, if you aren't sure if your stove was professionally installed, if it is older, or if the unit does not have a Certification label. Not only do you want to make sure it is safe to use, if it is your first stove, the inspector may be able to show you how to use it properly and avoid any potential mishaps.

Wood Stove Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Keep children and pets away when you are burning and keep anything combustible at least 3 feet away from the stove.
- Test to be sure your carbon monoxide and smoke alarms are in working condition. Both types of alarm should be located outside each sleeping area and on every level.
- Ashes can take several days to cool completely. Regularly remove ashes and dispose of them in a covered metal container at least 10 feet away from buildings or vehicles.
- Have your chimney cleaned and inspected regularly. If you burn regularly, checking halfway through the burning season to check for any creosote buildup is also a good idea.
- Have your wood stove inspected by a professional at least once every year for any wear and tear, and watch for buckling, cracks, open seams or corrosion.

Don't

- Make a larger fire than the stove can handle. Over firing will result in flames entering the flue pipe or chimney, and can cause damage or result in a fire outside of the unit.
- Let ashes build up in the bottom of the stove.
- Burn anything other than wood in your wood stove. Other combustibles (rubber, plastics, garbage, coal, etc) can damage your stove and could also explode or give off toxic fumes.

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