

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) gas can kill. Heating and cooking appliances fuelled by coal, smokeless fuels, wood, oil and gas can cause CO poisoning if they are poorly installed, incorrectly used or if they are not properly and regularly maintained.

Early symptoms of CO poisoning include tiredness, drowsiness, dizziness, chest pains, nausea and flu like symptoms.

You can reduce the risk of CO poisoning by:

- ✓ Having an appliance installed and properly checked by competent engineers
- ✓ Getting chimneys and flues inspected and swept
- ✓ Not overloading a fire and only burning the fuel that it is designed for
- ✓ Fitting a carbon monoxide detector
- ✓ Good ventilation



Carbon monoxide
gas can **Kill**

Useful Websites

For further technical information on chimney safety visit:

The Guild of Master Sweeps

www.guild-of-master-sweeps.co.uk

The National Association of Chimney Sweeps

www.nacs.org.uk

The Association of Professional and Independent Chimney Sweeps

www.apics.org.uk



For free home safety advice, call us now on freephone
0800 555 815

Information courtesy of Leicestershire
Fire and Rescue Service

Reference FSC 0047 A

www.manchesterfire.gov.uk

facebook.com/manchesterfire twitter.com/manchesterfire

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

www.manchesterfire.gov.uk



GREATER MANCHESTER
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Open fires and chimney safety



How will you know if you have a chimney fire?

All chimney fires are extremely dangerous – internal flue temperatures can reach 1000°C. As a result, radiant heat is emitted through the chimney walls and a devastating house fire could start, especially if you have a thatched or wooden roof.

The signs and symptoms of a chimney fire:

- ! A loud roaring noise, as a result of massive amounts of air being sucked through the burner or fireplace opening
- ! Sparks and flames seen shooting from the chimney top. These can be similar to fireworks in appearance
- ! A glowing or shimmering outlet or connector*
- ! A vibrating appliance**, outlet or connector
- ! Flames visible through any tiny cracks in the outlet or connector
- ! Smoke or smells noticeable in adjoining rooms or the loft space
- ! Chimney breast or flue heating up in either the same room or other rooms they pass through.

However, it is important to note that it is possible to experience a chimney fire without any of these characteristics, so this should only be treated as a guide.

* An outlet or connector is what joins the flue to the stove.

**An appliance is a stove, which may be wood burning, coal, gas or electric.



What to do if you have a chimney fire

- ✓ Call the Fire and Rescue Service – 999. If you are at all worried for your safety, then get out and stay out
- ✓ If you have a stove then shut all air vents and flue dampers to reduce the fire's oxygen supply
- ✓ Move flammable materials, furniture, ornaments away from the fireplace
- ✓ Feel the chimney breast throughout the house – if it is getting hot then move furniture away from it
- ✗ Do not pour water on the fire if you have a stove
- ✗ Do not pour salt on the fire. This can create chlorine gas, which is damaging to the chimney and toxic if it gets into the room
- ✓ Make sure firefighters can access the loft space

After a chimney fire

After a chimney fire has been put out, the chimney must be inspected as soon as possible. A certified chimney sweep should carry out a thorough inspection before the chimney is used again to see if there has been any damage caused and any remedial work needed.

Preventing a chimney fire

There are four main reasons for chimney fires – infrequent sweeping and cleaning, burning unseasoned wet wood, improper appliance sizing and overnight burning or smouldering of wood for long periods in stoves.

To reduce the risk of a chimney fire, you should:

- ✓ Sweep the chimney on a regular basis
- ✓ Ensure all wood burnt has a moisture content of less than 17%*
- ✓ Choose the correct size appliance for your room – seek advice for this
- ✗ Do not overload the grate or appliance
- ✓ Build smaller hotter fires that burn completely and produce less smoke
- ✓ Regularly have hot fires – once a day – this will help dry out the tar that has built up
- ✓ Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations on fuel loading and air flow if you have a stove
- ✗ Never burn cardboard boxes or waste paper
- ✗ Never use petrol or paraffin to light your fire
- ✓ Consider the use of a chimney cleaner additive – a non-zinc based additive that helps tar flake off the chimney
- ✓ Make sure you store all fuel away from the open fire or stove.

If you are in a rented property, your landlord has a duty of care towards you as a tenant to repair and keep in working order, any room heater and water heating equipment.

* Retailers of wood used for burning, should only sell wood with a water content less than 17%. If unsure, a meter can be purchased, which will register the water content.

Open fires and stoves

If you have an open fire or stove, follow the advice in this leaflet to reduce the risk of you becoming a fire statistic. If you are considering removing a gas fire or an electric heater and having an open fire or stove installed always use an approved fitter who will give you the correct guidance.

Remember, if you have an open fire or stove:

- ✓ Always use a guard or screen to protect against sparks from hot embers. If you have pets or young children consider using a safety guard
- ✓ Make sure the fire is out before you go to bed at night or leave the house
- ✓ Keep chimneys and flues clean and well maintained. Make sure your chimney is swept regularly
- ✓ Make sure your chimney is swept according to the type of fuel you use:
 - ! Smokeless fuel means your chimney will need cleaning at least once a year
 - ! Bituminous coal at least twice a year
 - ! Wood quarterly when in use
 - ! Oil once a year
 - ! Gas once a year
 - ! Never interrupt the air supply by blocking air vents or air bricks.

Always make sure you have a working smoke alarm fitted to each floor of your house and test it weekly. They help save your life by giving you early warning of a fire and extra seconds to get out.

