

Sweeping frequencies

Frequency will depend on a number of factors which include the type of fuel used, appliance, duration of use, moisture content of wood fuel, and the type of chimney you have. Your Chimney Sweep will be able to advise on the sweeping frequency during the appointment. The sweeping frequencies below are for guidance purposes only:-

- **Smokeless fuel:**
at least once a year
- **Wood**
quarterly when in use
- **Bituminous coal**
Quarterly when in use
- **Oil:** once a year
- **Gas:** once a year

Anybody who suspects their chimney may be on fire should call out the fire service immediately. Look out for excessive smoke, embers falling back into the hearth, sparks shooting from the chimney top, the walls of the chimney breast or adjacent walls becoming very hot to the touch.

Carbon monoxide – be aware

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 appliances installed and properly serviced by competent engineers
- getting chimneys and flues inspected and swept
- not overloading a fire and only burning the fuel it is designed for
- fitting a carbon monoxide detector
- good ventilation.



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To request any information in this document in an alternative format or language please call **0800 731 1822** or email **firesafety@dsfire.gov.uk**



DEVON &
SOMERSET
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Chimney safety



Safety advice for chimneys

Every year Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service attend hundreds of chimney fires which cost us over £250,000 a year. You can help us reduce this amount by reading the following safety advice to help you reduce the risk of your chimney catching fire.

Preventing chimney fires

Regular cleaning of your chimney or flues will eliminate the build-up of soot and clear obstructions such as bird or animal nests, leaves and debris. You will also reduce emissions into the atmosphere by assisting the complete combustion of fuel.

It is not sufficient to use a vacuum cleaner. You should ensure your chimney flue is inspected regularly to prevent fires breaking out.

The most common cause of chimney fires are:

- infrequent sweeping and cleaning
- burning unseasoned wood
- improper appliance sizing
- overnight burning or smouldering wood for long periods in wood stoves.

Seasoned wood

It is important that if you are burning wood that it is dry and well-seasoned, this means that it has 20% or less moisture content. A well-seasoned log will have drying out splits in the ends. You can also use a moisture gage, which are available from hardware stores, to tell you exactly how much moisture your wood contains.

It is a good idea to buy your wood at the beginning of the summer and store it outside where it can be exposed to the wind and sun and protected from direct rainfall.

Burning wet, newly-felled or coniferous wood can cause tar or creosote to form in the wood burner and chimney which can be hazardous.

Open fires

- Have your chimney swept before lighting the first fire of winter.
- Always place a fireguard around the fire.
- Do not overload the grate or build fires too high.
- Dispose of ash appropriately.
- Do not dry or air clothes on a fireguard.
- Ensure fires are extinguished before you go to bed.
- Never use petrol or paraffin to light your fire.



Wood-burning stoves

- The stove or boiler should be installed and regularly serviced by a competent engineer.
- It is important to use the correct size stove for your room. One that is too large will not get hot enough to burn all the fuel in the wood and un-burnt fuel will pass up the chimney as smoke and cause creosote, which is highly flammable, to form on the inside of the flue or chimney.
- Ensure the room is well ventilated.
- If the wood burner has been used slowly (overnight, for instance) this should be followed by a period of faster burning to dry out any creosote and to warm up the chimney again.
- Don't use your stove as an incinerator for general rubbish.

