

Preventing Chimney Fires

Clean Chimneys are Safer Chimneys

Chimney sweeping is important; it could save your life. It reduces the risk of a chimney fire and also reduces the risk of Carbon Monoxide poisoning, which can be caused by blockages in heating appliance flue ways and chimneys. We attend on average 150 chimney fires a year.

Our suggested frequency for sweeping your chimney is detailed below:

Chimneys using smokeless fuel	Sweep at least once a year
Chimneys using coal	Sweep at least once every six months
Chimneys using wood and peat	Sweep at least once every three months
Chimneys using oil	Sweep once a year

- Do not light fires using flammable liquids such as petrol or paraffin.
- Do not burn paper or rubbish on fires in the grate.
- Use a spark guard when the fire is unattended.
- Occasionally check the chimney in the loft when the fire is alight, checking for smoke from cracks, defective brickwork or mortar joints.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning

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.

CO poisoning kills people, it can also damage your health permanently. The early symptoms of CO poisoning are: Tiredness, Dizziness, Nausea, Drowsiness and Chest pains.

Make sure you are not at risk from CO poisoning by:

- Having appliances installed and properly checked by a competent engineer.
- Getting your chimney or flue inspected and checked.
- Not overloading a fire and only burning the fuel it is designed for.
- Fitting a Carbon Monoxide detector

Ventilation

Heating appliances must be able to breathe in order to function efficiently, whatever the type of fuel they burn. To breathe they need a constant and sufficient flow of air, so make sure the room is not completely airtight. If your home has draught-proofing or double-glazing fitted, you may need vents or air bricks in an exterior wall of the room. If you already have the vents or air bricks, make sure they are not blocked or covered.

Have your gas or oil-fired boiler serviced and flue checked once a year.