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USE CAUTION WITH WOODBURNING APPLIANCES

Do you burn wood in your home? If so, beware of the risks. Fire-loss statistics show that nearly half of all residential fires are caused by woodburning appliances. Of those, about four out of 10 involve the chimney, gas vent, or flue.

Creosote buildup is involved in about nine out of 10 chimney fires. Creosote – a black, sticky byproduct of burning wood – forms when unburned gases condense onto cool surfaces like the firebox and flue areas. Since creosote is combustible, you need to prevent its buildup. Follow these tips:

- Burn only dry, seasoned wood.
- Burn the wood as completely as possible.
- Don't burn wood all night.
- Don't burn garbage, treated wood, lots of plywood, particle board, or plastics, all of which build creosote.

People who burn wood occasionally – like only during the winter holidays or on special occasions – probably accumulate creosote slowly. But if you burn wood regularly, or burn more than half a cord annually, you can enjoy peace of mind (and perhaps increase heating efficiency) by thoroughly inspecting and cleaning your woodburning stove/insert and chimney at least once a year. PEMCO recommends you get a professional to do it. Look for those listed as members of the Washington State Chimney Sweep Guild.

For more woodburning safety tips, see our fact sheet titled, “How safe is your heat source?”

Stay safe. Clean your chimney at least once a year.

EXAMPLE OF PROPER WOODSTOVE INSTALLATION

If the chimney is behind a wall, an approved thimble and collar must pass the stovepipe through the wall. The stove must be 36 inches from any unprotected wall. If a quarter-inch asbestos mill-board shield is used, a minimum of 18 inches is required. *(Example only – building codes in your county may vary.)*

