



Updated January, 2011

CODE INFORMATION SHEET

Chimney and Woodstove Safety

Fireplaces

Have your chimney inspected by a professional prior to the start of every heating season and cleaned if necessary. Creosote, a chemical substance that forms when wood burns, builds up in chimneys and can cause a chimney fire if not removed through cleaning.

Always protect your home and your family by using a sturdy fireplace screen when burning fires. Remember to burn only wood - never burn paper or pine boughs, which can float out the chimney and ignite your roof or a neighboring home.

Do not use flammable liquids in a fireplace. If you are purchasing a factory-built fireplace, select one listed by a testing laboratory, and have it installed according to local codes. If you decorate your fireplace with Christmas stockings or other seasonal decorations, don't burn fires in it.

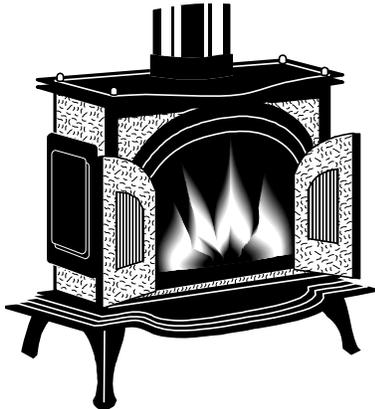
Wood Stoves

Be sure your wood stove bears the mark of an independent testing laboratory and meets local fire codes.

Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for proper installation, use and maintenance.

Chimney connections and chimney flues should be inspected at the beginning of each heating season and cleaned when necessary.

Follow the same safety rules for wood stoves as you would for space heaters. Burn only wood, and be sure the wood stove is placed on an approved stove board to protect the floor from heat and hot coals.



Fireplaces and wood burning stoves are auxiliary home heating devices that demand care and attention in their purchase, installation, and maintenance.

For someone considering the installation of a wood or coal stove, a fireplace, or a solid-fuel furnace, careful consideration must be given to the safety aspects of the equipment and the installation.

Following these precautions can reduce the possibility of a fire or injury related to woodstove use.

- All wood burning stoves and fireplaces should be cleaned and inspected before the heating season begins.
- Make sure that the door latch closes properly.
- Furnaces and water heaters which have flue pipes attached to the chimney of a fireplace or wood burning stove should have tight fitting joints and seams.
- Never use liquid fuel to start the fire in a fireplace or wood burning stove.
- Ashes need to be thoroughly dampened, cooled, and stored in metal cans that are used solely for ash storage, **not** in compost piles, cartons, boxes or anything else that is combustible.
- It is important to use only thoroughly dried hardwood. This will prevent or slow the buildup of creosote. That is the cause of many chimney fires.
- Have the chimney and flue inspected by a qualified mason or chimney sweep prior to use. Cracks in the flue or mortar joints can allow flames and heated gases to extend into the structure.
- Use a fireplace screen to prevent flying sparks and embers from falling out onto the floor.
- Install and maintain smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to provide protection for your family.

Although following these precautions should reduce your risk of a chimney fire, be aware of the signs of one and know what to do if you encounter them -- a loud roar, sucking sounds, shaking pipes, hot spots on wall or chimney, or smoke in the house or apartment are signs of a problem.

If you hear or see any of these sounds shut off the fire's air supply, get everyone out of the house quickly, and call 911 from a neighbor's phone.

See the back of this page for additional information on code requirements

REQUIREMENTS OF THE VERMONT FIRE AND BUILDING SAFETY CODE

Minimum Performance. A chimney or vent shall be so designed and constructed to develop a flow sufficient to remove completely all flue or vent gases to the outside atmosphere. [NFPA 211 Sec.4.1.1]

Solid fuel-burning appliances listed for installation in enclosed spaces or alcoves less than 512 cu ft shall be installed in accordance with the requirements of the listing and the manufacturer's instructions. [NFPA 211 Sec 12.2.2.1]

Solid fuel-burning appliances shall not be installed in any location where gasoline or any other flammable vapors or gases are present.. [NFPA 211 Sec 12.2.3]

Solid fuel-burning appliances shall not be installed in any garage.

Any floor assembly, slab, or arch shall extend not be less than 18 in. (457 mm) beyond the appliance on all sides. [NFPA 211 Sec 12.5.1.1.4]

In lieu of the requirements for floor protection specified herein, a floor protector listed by a recognized testing laboratory and installed in accordance with the installation instructions shall be permitted to be employed. [NFPA 211 Sec 12.5.1.1.5]

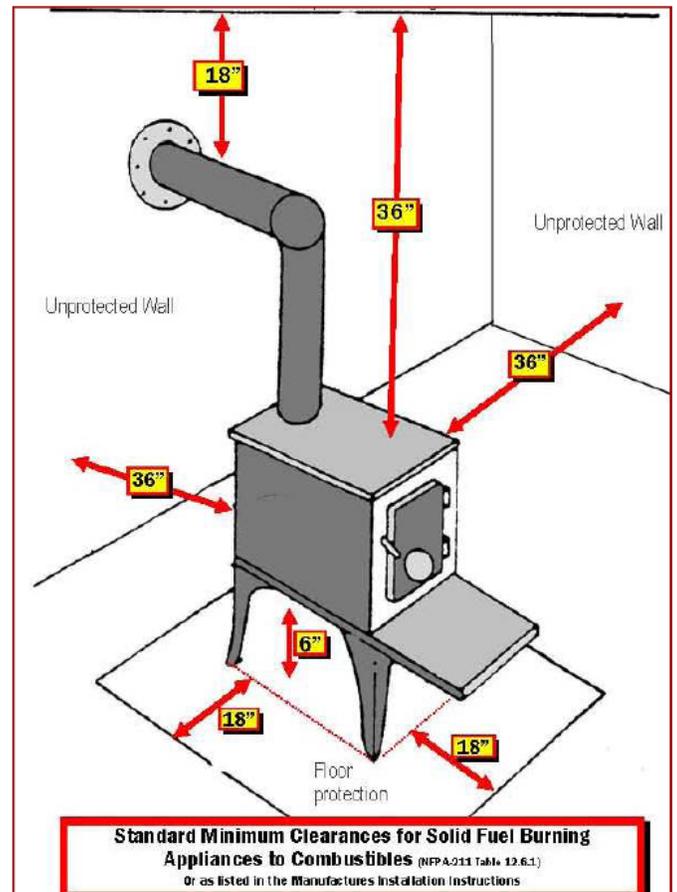
Clearances from Solid Fuel-Burning Appliances shall be not less than specified in Table 12.6.1.

Appliances listed for installation with clearances less than specified in Table 12.6.1 shall be permitted to be installed in accordance with the terms of their listing and the manufacturer's instructions.

Chimneys, fireplaces, and vents shall be inspected at least once a year.

Important tips to avoid fires during the winter heating season:

- Make sure all fuel-burning vented equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms on every level of the home.
- Keep 3' / 36" / 1 meter between heating equipment and anything that can burn - or in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Never leave portable space heaters and candles unattended - turn off heaters before going to bed.
- Clean chimneys and vent pipes annually – put ashes in metal containers.
- Un-vented heaters are not permitted in apartment buildings or condos, if you use one you should have a working carbon monoxide alarm installed in the same room.
- Never use lighter fluid, kerosene, diesel fuel, or gasoline to start a fire.
- Always use the proper grade and type of fuel for heating equipment.
- Plan and practice escape plans several times a year.
- Install and maintain heating equipment in accordance with codes and manufacturer's instructions. It may be best to have a qualified professional install the equipment.



This sheet is designed to promote fire prevention, code compliance and to enhance the public safety of all Vermonters. This sheet provides a detailed overview of one common issue and is not an all-inclusive list of state laws or additional code requirements that may apply. For additional information or details you should contact an Asst. State Fire Marshal in your regional office of the Division of Fire Safety. This sheet was developed as an educational resource with information provided from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Division of Fire Safety Regional Offices

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