

# Chimney Maintenance

*Your winter reminder*

Autumn chills remind us that it's time to prepare for the frosty temperatures of winter! Make sure you and your family are safely snug and warm this season by ensuring that your heating system is ready to do its job when temperatures plummet! All heating appliances – whether they use wood, oil, propane, natural gas, or other materials – produce toxic gases and fumes. For safety's sake – have a qualified professional service your furnace or stove every year.

**Here are a few safety tips to help you prepare your home for winter:**

- Have your heating appliance checked by a professional.
- Clean all connecting flue pipes. Make sure there is no rust or discoloration, and that all joints fit tightly and are secured by at least three metal screws at every joint.
- Make sure your chimney is clean and that the liner is in good repair. Rust, separated seams, and interior collapse are signs that your chimney must be replaced.
- Check all ductwork, heating vents and registers. Dust and other combustibles can collect on your heating elements over the summer.

## **The deadly danger of toxic gas**

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colourless and odourless gas. It is a sneaky killer because victims are not aware of its presence – until it's too late! You can't see it, taste it or smell it. Everyone is at risk, but the most vulnerable are those with heart or lung problems, infants, unborn babies, children and older adults.

If you inhale moderate amounts of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) mixed with carbon monoxide (CO) you will experience flu-like symptoms such as headaches, nausea, dizziness, irritability and confusion. If you breathe in enough of this gas cocktail you will vomit, lose consciousness, suffer from brain damage and eventually DIE.

## **What causes this kind of gas poisoning?**

### **Plugged Chimney**

Burning substances create gases that must be allowed to escape from your home. Exhaust systems must have proper clearance and must be checked for blockages.

### **Collapsed Liners**

All chimneys and stovepipes must be visually inspected. A collapsed liner will not allow toxic gases to escape.

### **Improperly installed Appliances**

Do not use more than one fuel-burning appliance in a small, contained room. The use of too many heating units in a small space will not allow the appliances enough oxygen to burn properly and this may result in the production of carbon monoxide, a deadly gas.

Modern, airtight homes are equipped with air exchangers. If these units are not properly installed, not enough fresh air (oxygen) will enter your home from outdoors. Depleted levels of oxygen will prevent your heating unit from burning properly, allowing deadly gases to form.

### **What precautions will protect my home and family?**

- A working smoke alarm is your first defence in the early detection of fire. Install one on every level of your home. Make sure you change its battery at least annually.
- A carbon monoxide detector will help protect you against toxic gases and deadly fumes. These detectors can be hardwired, with a battery back up, and should not be placed in furnace and laundry rooms, or in any room containing a fuel fired heating unit.
- Portable fuel-fired heaters, charcoal grills, and gas lanterns need ventilation when used indoors. Before operating these appliances, make sure gases are vented outdoors. Make sure you keep a window partially open or install a mechanical ventilation unit.
- Prevent deadly fumes from entering your home. Don't run your car's engine in an attached garage or next to an open door or window where the exhaust can enter your home.
- Prevent a deadly disaster by being safety conscious about fire and carbon monoxide poisoning!

**THINK SAFE! STAY SAFE!**