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Don't let burning logs become combustible clogs

Topeka, Kan. – Santa shouldn't be the only one sweeping up and down the chimney. Each winter, as temperatures begin to drop, the reported number of chimney fires rise. On average, annually, there is over \$250 million in property damage caused by chimney fires.

The best way to avoid a chimney fire is to have it professionally inspected and cleaned yearly. Along with a professional chimney sweep, homeowners can practice additional fire prevention measures:

1. **The fireplace is not the place for leftover holiday gift wrap.** Wrapping paper burns quickly and often creates higher-than-normal flames within the fireplace. These higher flames are more likely to ignite chemical buildups and cause a chimney fire. Burnt wrapping paper is also more prone to take flight and potentially ignite a chemical buildup as it floats up the chimney flue.
2. **Santa may say “No No No” but capping the chimney deserves a jolly “Ho Ho Ho.”** Installing a chimney cap is one of the most effective ways to prevent falling leaves and other flammable debris from entering the chimney. Capping the top of the chimney can also prevent wayward critters from entering and building highly combustible nests within the chimney.
3. **Tis the season(ed).** Only burn wood that has spent at least six months stored outdoors, elevated off the ground, split into pieces, and covered from the elements (seasoned). Well-seasoned wood contains less moisture which produces more smoke and increases the buildup of combustible chemicals.
4. **Trade out the yule log for a chimney sweeping log.** A chimney sweeping log emits additives that can help breakdown the buildup responsible for causing chimney fires. This chemical breakdown can loosen buildup and assist in chimney sweeping efforts.
5. **The old flexible flyer should not fuel the fire.** That wooden sled sitting in the attic was most likely built with wood that has been “treated.” Along with producing an assortment of unhealthy toxins, burning treated wood within a fireplace accelerates the buildup of combustible chemicals in the flue.

“When the need for heat increases during the winter months, the chilly holiday season can be a perfect time to review fire safety measures,” said Insurance Commissioner Vicki Schmidt. “Not only will Santa enjoy a clean suit, but you'll keep your loved ones safe.”

Learn more ways to help keep the chimney clean and Santa's suit soot-free at epa.gov/burnwise. For information about home insurance visit insurance.kansas.gov/home-renters-insurance/.

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