

Proper Fireplace Cleaning Tips

The Ballinger Fire Department would like to remind the citizens of the following safety tips so that with the cold weather, they can enjoy the warmth of their fireplace safely.

When you clean your fireplace, there are a few things to keep in mind.

- You should always place discarded fireplace ashes in a heavy **metal** container, moisten the ashes and cover the container with a metal lid. **NEVER USE A PAPER BAG**, a cardboard box or a plastic trash bag in the cleaning process. Never use a vacuum cleaner to pick up ashes.
- Ashes should be kept in a metal container outside, away from the house to cool. Your garage, house, or deck are dangerous locations for ashes to cool. After ashes have cooled in a metal container, it is necessary to find a suitable dump site.
- **NEVER DUMP FIREPLACE ASHES UNTIL THEY HAVE HAD AT LEAST THREE DAYS TO COOL.**
- Even after three days, great care should be given in selecting a dump site. Wooded areas should always be avoided in order to prevent the possibility of a costly forest fire.

Proper disposal of Fireplace ashes:

Garden areas or flower beds are ideal locations to dump cooled fireplace ashes, allowing many nutrients to return to the soil. Please survey the area and evaluate any additional hazards before disposing of your cooled ashes. Make sure all dry leaves have been removed from the area before dumping your ashes in either a garden or flower bed that is away from the house and moisten the area.

What can you do to help?

The most important contribution you as a homeowner can make is simply to heed our message of prevention and tell family and friends. Our goal is to eliminate fireplace ashes related fire in Alamo Heights. Every fire we prevent brings us closer to success.

Heat... Without Getting Burned

Accidents with heating equipment are the number one cause of all home fires. And, most of these fires could have been prevented with proper understanding and use of heating equipment. To reduce the chances of a fire in your home, it is vital that you purchase tested and labeled heating equipment, install and maintain it correctly, and operate it safely. Here are some tips that will help you heat your home... without getting burned.

Give Space Heaters Space:

Place portable heaters at least 36 inches (3 feet) away from things that burn - - paper, bedding, clothing, furniture, or curtains. Remember always to turn off space heaters before leaving home or going to bed.

Don't Add Fuel Until It's Cool:

If your heater runs on liquid fuel, such as kerosene, let the heater cool down before refueling. Adding fuel to a hot heater can start a dangerous fire. When purchasing fuel, make sure it is the right type for your heater.

Use the Right Fuel:

With liquid-fueled heaters, use only fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Never use substitutes or lower-grade fuels. Never ever put gasoline in a heater! Remember to burn only wood in your fireplace or woodstove.

Check For Frayed or Hot Wires:

Inspect the cords on your electric heaters. If the cord is frayed or splitting, or if it overheats when the heater is in operation, watch out! You've got a fire hazard on your hands. Do not use the heater until you've had the cord replaced by an appliance repair person.

Keep Your Chimney Clean:

The build-up combustible creosot and carbon deposits in the chimney pose a dangerous fire threat. Have your chimney inspected by a professional before every heating season and cleaned if necessary. If you use a woodstove, be sure to have chimney connections and flues inspected and cleaned. Consider installing a spark arrestor on top of your chimney, especially if you live in a wooded or densely populated area.

Don't Build a Fire Without a Screen:

Whenever you have a fire in the fireplace, always place a screen made of sturdy metal or heat-tempered glass on the hearth. This will prevent sparks or burning wood from escaping the fireplace and starting a fire in your home.

Don't Leave Children Alone With a Heater:

Portable heaters should be used only when there is an adult present. Remove them from any rooms where children are playing alone. Purchase portable heaters that have a broad, solid base with an automatic shut-off switch in case they are knocked over accidentally.

Use Woodstoves Wisely:

If you have a wood or coal stove, be sure it is installed at least 36 inches away from the wall. Keep combustible materials well away from the stove and chimney connector. Place an approved stove board under the unit to protect the floor from heat and hot coals which might drop out. Follow the manufacture's installation and maintenance instructions of the unit.

Be Prepared!

No matter how careful you are with home heating, you and your family should be prepared in case fire strikes.