

# Chimney Safety

This is the first in a series of article issued by the PMCPOA Patrol reminding everyone of the less-often thought about causes of house fires.

The recent house fires have reminded us that we can never be too vigilant regarding fire prevention. The following advice is from the Chimney Safety Institute of America.

Chimney fires are a dangerous and serious problem to have, but the good news is that they are also almost entirely preventable. You must be careful to only burn materials that are ready and meant to be burned. For example, only use seasoned, dry wood, newspapers and dry kindling.

Burning cardboard boxes, regular trash or wrapping paper will cause the creation of excess creosote and put your home and family in danger. While using the correct fuel is important, a chimney fire can still occur even after taking these precautions. Creosote is a black or brown residue that can be crusty and flaky, tar-like, drippy and sticky, or shiny and hardened. At first, the buildup may be light and easy to remove. But with each fire you burn in your fireplace, creosote can build up, thicken, and glaze.

You may also have a chimney fire and never know it until it is too late. Besides the raging blazes, slow burning fires can also take place within the chimney walls and you may never know these fires are going on. These fires may burn silently, but their silence is no indication of the harm they may cause, slow burning fires burn at incredibly high temperatures and can cause serious structural damage to the chimney as well as nearby walls of the home.

This is why annual chimney inspections and cleanings are a critical part of home maintenance. If your chimney is clean, there will not be a fire; therefore, regular inspections and cleanings are necessary to ensure you and your home have a safe and happy winter season.

*Here is a sample photo of chimney fire damage.*

