



## SASSAFRAS-FERNY CREEK FIRE BRIGADE

PO Box 5, Sassafras, Victoria 3787 Telephone 9755 1078 Fax 9755 3016  
Email: [secretary@sassafrascfa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sassafrascfa.org.au) Website: [www.sassafrascfa.org.au](http://www.sassafrascfa.org.au)

18 May2008

# Don't forget to clean that chimney!

Now that winter's around the corner, thoughts turn to open fires, wood heaters and stoves. And from this time onwards every year, the brigade is called to a number of preventable fires in chimneys.

While a chimney fire might not seem like such a big deal, it can quickly lead to the whole house catching fire. Before you light up this winter, take some simple steps to make sure fire in the hearth doesn't become fire in the house!

**Creosote:** Chimneys have the job of expelling the by-products of combustion — the substances given off when wood burns. As these substances flow up into the relatively cooler chimney, condensation occurs. The resulting residue that sticks to the inner walls of the chimney is called creosote. Creosote is black-brown in appearance. It can be crusty and flaky ... tar-like, drippy and sticky ... or shiny and hardened. Often, all forms will occur in a chimney. Whatever its form, creosote is highly combustible and needs to be removed periodically.

**Air supply:** The air supply to fireplaces may be restricted by closed glass doors or by failure to open the damper wide enough to move heated smoke up the chimney rapidly. The longer smoke's "residence time" in the flue, the more likely it is that creosote will form. A wood stove's air supply can be limited by closing down the stove damper or air inlets too soon and too much.

**Chimney Fires Burning Unseasoned Firewood:** Because so much energy is used just to expel the water trapped in the cells of timber, green wood makes for cooler smoke as it moves up the chimney than if dried, seasoned wood is used.

### Ways to keep the fire you want from starting one you don't:

- Use well seasoned wood only (dryness is more important than the type of wood, but some wood such as pine is best avoided)
- Build smaller, hotter fires that burn more completely and produce less smoke
- Have the chimney inspected and cleaned on a regular basis

**Proper maintenance:** Clean chimneys don't catch fire. Make sure a reputable chimney sweep inspects your system regularly, and cleans and repairs it as needed.

### IF YOU HAVE A CHIMNEY FIRE ...

- Get everyone out of the house.
- **Call the fire brigade.**

If you can do so without risk the following steps may help save your home.

1. Extinguish the fire in the fireplace or stove
2. Close the doors and air inlets on a wood stove.

When it's over, call in a chimney sweep.

