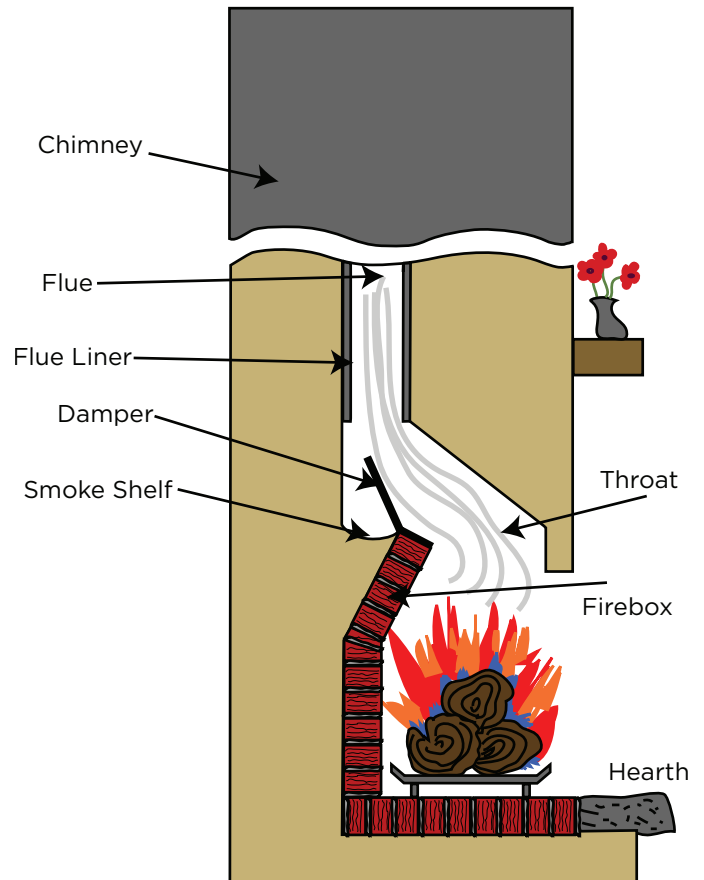


# Fireplaces & Wood Stoves

There is nothing like the ambiance of a wood burning fireplace. But like any heating system, wood burning fireplaces require maintenance to ensure safe and efficient operation. They should be inspected and cleaned every year. This process is not a do-it-yourself job.

Most chimney flues are not readily visible when you look up the chimney. Often, you cannot properly inspect the flue until it has been cleaned. It is important to get your chimney and flue cleaned and inspected every year for a number of reasons, but the two main reasons involve safety. Simply put, get the flue cleaned to avoid a chimney fire. A chimney fire occurs when the combustible deposits in the chimney (creosote) ignite. A chimney fire involves flames shooting out the chimney top, and air roaring up the chimney to feed the fire. It is as loud as it is dangerous! A chimney sweep can remove the creosote deposits that potentially cause fires. Second, have the flue inspected. A flue liner in good condition will help protect your home if you do have a chimney fire. An inspection of the chimney flue is not part of a home inspection. Call a trained technician to clean and inspect your chimney flue.



## Old Unlined Chimneys

Fireplaces in old homes may not have clay flue liners. It is particularly important to seek the advice of an expert for these old chimneys. Unlined brick chimneys come in two varieties: single thickness (four inches of brick), and double thickness (eight inches of brick). There is little debate that a four inch thick, unlined chimney is not acceptable. This chimney should either have a liner added, or the fireplace decommissioned. For chimneys with eight inch brick, conflicting opinions abound. Some believe these are safe as long as the brick and mortar are in good condition, and the flue is cleaned regularly. Others believe that double brick flues should also have a liner added. Consider hiring an expert who does not offer a chimney lining service. This will give you an unbiased expert opinion on whether a liner is needed.

## Glass Doors

Some fireplaces have glass doors across their opening. The glass doors reduce heat loss when the fireplace is not running. Most glass door systems added to an existing fireplace are not designed to be closed when the fire is lit. On the other hand, some high efficiency zero-clearance fireplaces are designed for operation with the doors closed. If you are not sure, ask the technician who cleans and inspects your fireplace and flue.

## Wood Stove

A wood stove is more efficient than a fireplace. Modern wood stoves burn wood cleanly and efficiently. Like fireplaces, the wood stove must be cleaned and inspected annually. An expert will check the flue, the hearth and the clearance to combustibles. The clearance to combustibles information is listed on the data tag on the wood stove.

## Zero-Clearance

Today, a fireplace can be added to almost any home. A zero-clearance fireplace can be installed directly against an existing wall and supported by the existing floor (a foundation is not required). A good installer is a must for this job.

## Tips for All Wood Burning Fireplaces

- Do not burn trash.
- Do not burn pressure-treated or painted wood.
- Burn seasoned hardwood. Softwood will cause creosote to build up more quickly.
- Load the logs near the back of the fireplace.
- Use the spark screen.
- Make sure smoke and CO detectors are functioning.
- Have the chimney and fireplace or wood stove inspected and cleaned annually.

