

# Ten Tips for Safer, Cleaner Fireplace Burning

Fireplace fires can cause emergencies, and breathing wood smoke is bad for our lungs and our hearts.

The following suggestions will keep you and our community safer and healthier.

1. Save your fireplace or woodstove for special occasions. Especially avoid using it during air pollution episodes and during inversions (when the air is very stagnant and does not move). Check the webpage of your local air pollution control district or air quality management district for current and anticipated air pollution conditions. Don't burn when local restrictions are in place.
2. Don't burn trash. Don't burn: plastics, chemicals, wrapping paper, magazines, or colored or coated papers (including newspaper inserts, junk mail, etc.). Also don't burn charcoal, coal, or holiday greens. All of these contain and can emit toxic chemicals when burned.
3. Be a good neighbor and notice your smoke. Build small hot fires rather than large smoldering ones. Use seasoned (dry, not green) hard woods that burn hot and provide complete combustion; this produces much less smoke. Avoid "roaring" fires. They can start chimney fires and can lead to overheating of wall or roof materials.
4. Use a gas fireplace with artificial logs if you can. Better yet, replace it with a direct-vent, sealed combustion gas fireplace or woodstove: these models do not use room air for the fire and do not emit smoke into the room.
5. Have your chimney cleaned annually at the start of the woodburning season.
6. Never use gasoline, charcoal lighter or other fuel to light or relight a fire because the vapors can explode.
7. Do not allow small children near the fireplace.
8. Never leave a fire unattended. Make sure the fire is completely out before going to bed or leaving the house.
9. Be sure no flammable materials hang down from or decorate your mantel.
10. Make sure you have basic fire safety equipment. Keep a type ABC fire extinguisher near the fireplace, install a screen that completely covers the fireplace opening, equip your house with smoke detectors, and use a spark arrester on top of your chimney.