



By their very nature, open fires pose a risk whereby precautions should be taken to reduce the risk of incident or injury.

Open fires generate a significant amount of heat, particularly where the flue is single brick and where no chimney liners are installed. Where wood is used as a fuel; tar and soot build up rapidly and if not managed can cause a chimney fire and cause damage to the mortar.

We've put together some recommended actions to reduce the risks to yourself and others if you have log burners &/or open fires at your premises.

Preventative measures to be taken include:

- Ensure the chimney is swept by a competent person* and a certificate provided. It is recommended annually for smokeless fuels, 6 monthly for bituminous coal and once a season when in use for wood burning open fires.
- Ensure the chimney mortar and lining is maintained and in good condition. This can be examined by CCTV equipment to identify any defects.
- Store fuel and combustible materials well away from the fire.
- Burn only dry wood (logs should be less than 20% water) such as seasoned dry wood, from reputable suppliers.
- Do not burn other combustible waste such as paper and cardboard. This can lead to an increase build-up of tar.
- Where a chimney liner is installed they must be suitable for the fuel type it is serving and be installed by a competent person*.
- The open fire should have a non-combustible hearth in front and the use of fire guards are recommended to prevent sparks from hot embers.
- Make sure fires are extinguished before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Do not stand close to the fire, clothing can easily catch alight.
- Do not hang combustible items on the mantelpiece or fire guard to dry.
- Do not cover up air ventilation, this can produce carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas which you can't see, smell or taste.

*A competent person is defined as accredited by HETAS or a similar organisation



- Where thatch roofs are installed, inspect the condition of the chimney stack, timber and linings every 3 years.
- Ensure the chimney stack protrudes at least 1.8 metres above the ridge.
- Where open fires and/or log burners are present an important risk control measure is the use of a fire screen to provide protection to nearby combustible materials. There are no specific standards but the screen should be of "sufficient" size to provide adequate protection.

The use of open fires should be reviewed in-line with your fire risk assessment, to ensure proposed arrangements are acceptable from a fire and life safety perspective.

Further considerations should be made in relation to the provision of fire detection (including carbon monoxide detection) and fire extinguishing appliances, all of which must be subject to regular inspection and maintenance programmes.

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