



## Graham Fire & Rescue

### CHIMNEY FIRES

Creosote is the build up of tar and soot from unseasoned wood pitch, which cools in the smoke and sticks to the interior surface of the chimney or flue. Burning “green” or wet wood presents a higher hazard for chimney fires. The warmer days may mean the stove is not burned all day, which allows the flue or chimney to cool. The cooling or lack of continuous heating of the flue, and the burning of illegal household trash can also create a buildup of creosote.

Creosote can eventually build up to the point that it blocks the draft of the chimney or creates a fuel source for a fire resembling a flammable liquid fire. The next time a large hot fire is built in the stove or fireplace, the heated air may cause the creosote to ignite.

The chimney or flue fire is not always noticed by the homeowner and may often be called in to the 911 center by neighbors. If allowed to burn for any length of time, the fire may find defects in the chimney or flue and escape into the structure causing extensive damage before it is noticed. The “rushing sound” of air in the chimney or excessive heat from the exposed part of the flue may indicate that a flue fire is occurring.

The best way to prevent these fires is to burn only dry seasoned wood in a hot fire, reducing the buildup of creosote. Always have your chimney inspected at the beginning of each burning season for creosote buildup and any damage that may have occurred over time from repeated heating and cooling.