

CITY OF BATAVIA
FIREPLACE SUGGESTIONS



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Please direct all questions to the City of Batavia Building Division of the Community Development Department, Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 4 PM at (630) 454-2700.

Information and advice contained herein has been excerpted from CHIMNEYS.COM and should never replace that of a trained chimney professional. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of this information.

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Smoking Fireplaces:

The most common smoking troubles occur when the fire is first lit. If your fireplace smokes only during startup, but is okay after that, here are some possibilities to investigate.

Fireplace Dampers:

The purpose of a fireplace damper is to prevent heat loss when a fireplace is not being used. Don't forget to open the damper before you start a fire. When the fire is completely out, usually sometime the following day, don't forget to close it. An open damper is like an open window, allowing large amounts of heated air to escape.

When lighting a fire, open the damper completely. Some people attempt to operate the fireplace with the damper partly closed in a effort to retain more heat in the room. However, this will only afford the homeowner a room full of smoke! No matter how the fireplace is operated, it is not an efficient heater and should be operated for entertainment and atmosphere purposes only.

Cold Flue:

The flue will be cold when first opening the damper, and this is especially true for fireplaces built on the outside of the house. A tall column of cold air in the flue will tend to sink, causing air to move down the chimney and into the house. If this column of cold air coming down the chimney is felt, do not light the fire! The cold air might force smoke back into the house.

A tall column of warm air is needed in the chimney, so the next step is to prime the flue.

Priming the Flue:

Roll up a piece of newspaper and light one end. Hold it high in the damper opening and in about a minute you can feel the draft reverse, as warm gasses start to move up the flue. This step may have to be repeated depending on the temperature of the chimney column.

Once the flue has been primed, the fire may be lit.

If the chimney has a severe cold chimney problem, priming the flue with a newspaper may not work. If this is the case, try leaving the damper open for half an hour, allowing heated room air to gradually reverse the flow.

Chimney Blockages:

A smoking problem may be caused by partial or complete blockage of the flue. Animal nests, leaves and debris, or internal collapse of chimney brickwork can cause blockages. If you think your chimney may be blocked, or if you have not had it checked by a chimney professional in the past year, make an appointment.

Monitoring Smoky Fireplaces:

Here's a trick for monitoring smoky fireplaces: If you cannot see the smoke spilling from the fireplace, shine a flashlight across the fireplace opening. The light reflecting off the smoke particles will make it easy to see.