

CHIMNEY CLEANING

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Several years ago at a board of directors meeting, the Secretary of the Association (Jim) mentioned the problem he had faced the previous weekend. He stated that he and his family had popped the popcorn, rented a movie, lit a fire in the fireplace and were prepared to sit down for a “night at the movies.”

Their home was only 2 years old and Jim didn’t think that creosote would have had time to build up in the flue in his fireplace. Depending on the type of wood that is burned in your fireplace, the creosote will build up much faster on the walls than with other types of wood. Jim had been burning some old pallets, which he had chopped up for firewood because it burned very hot, started easier and was “cheap”. He had also been burning a cord of oak he had purchased.

As his family was watching one of their favorite movies, they heard a huge “whoosh” sound coming from outside. They assumed a plane was going overhead or a sudden draft of wind had come up and caused the sound. It wasn’t until a neighbor came over to tell him that he had a huge fire coming out of his fireplace did he realize he had a very hot fire in his flue.

Jim was able to call the fire department and get the fire put out before it spread, but he learned a very valuable lesson. Fireplaces need to be inspected annually by a chimney sweep who is trained to clean the flue adequately to prevent this type of fire. Jim was lucky as there are many fires annually caused by dirty flues that totally destroy the homes. What if his neighbor had not seen the flames coming from the top of his roof? What if they had decided to make a quick run out to pickup more sodas, left a log on the grate and were not even home at the time.

Newer homes in Nevada do not have actual wood burning fireplaces, but older communities have them. Minimally, communities should put reminders in the newsletter and if the Association has maintenance responsibility for the fire places, have periodical cleanout of the flues by a properly trained Chimney Sweep.

Managers who have not been managing for a long period of time or have only managed newer communities most likely will not have a line item on their “things to do annually” chimney cleaning, which would be disastrous for older communities with fire places.