

Devizes Area Board Report – 19th November 2018.

Chimney safety



A clean chimney can help prevent fires and structural damage to your property. Regular cleaning of your chimney or flue will eliminate the build-up of soot and clear obstructions such as bird or animal nests, leaves and debris.

It is not enough to use a vacuum cleaner and you should make sure that your chimney or flue is inspected regularly.

Chimneys should be swept:

- At least once a year when using smokeless fuels
- At least once a year when using bituminous coal
- Every three months when burning wood
- Once a year when using oil
- Once a year when using gas

The following safety advice should always be followed when lighting an open fire or woodburning stove:

- Don't use flammable liquids such as petrol or paraffin to light your fire.
- Don't burn excessive amounts of paper or rubbish.
- Don't overload the fire with fuel.

When the fire is alight, check the loft space occasionally to make sure there is no smoke leaking from cracks, defective brickwork or mortar joints

Further information

Guild of Master Chimney Sweeps www.guildofmasterchimneysweeps.co.uk

National Association of Chimney Sweeps – www.nacs.org.uk

Getting Ready for winter



Keeping warm in the winter means using portable heaters, electric blankets or wheat-bags – but all of these carry a fire risk.

Portable heaters

- Keep heaters at least one metre (3ft) away from curtains and furniture.
- Never use portable heaters for drying clothes.
- Always unplug portable heaters before going to bed or leaving the property.
- Only use gas and paraffin heaters in well ventilated areas.

Open fires

- Keep chimneys and flues clean and well maintained, ensuring that they are swept at least once a year.
- Make sure you always use a fireguard to protect against sparks and hot embers.
- Don't hang laundry too close to the fire in case of sparks.
- Ensure that the fire is fully out before you go to bed or leave the property.

Gas fires

- A Gas Safe registered engineer should carry out installation and maintenance.
- Ventilation is essential – vents should never be blocked or obstructed.
- Do not turn any electrical switches on or off if you can smell gas.
- If you can smell gas, get out of the property and call 999.

Electric blankets

- When buying an electric blanket, go to a reputable retailer and make sure the product meets the current UK and European safety standards – for example, BEAB Approved.
- Always read the manufacturer's instructions before use.
- Never use a hot water bottle in the same bed as an electric blanket, even if the blanket is switched off.
- Unplug blankets before you get into bed unless they have a thermostat control for safe all-night use.
- When storing an electric blanket, don't fold it as this may damage the internal wiring. Store flat or rolled up.
- Examine the blanket regularly for signs of wear and tear – for example, worn or frayed fabric, scorch marks, wires poking through the material, any damage to the flex. If you find an issue, get the blanket replaced.
- Get your blanket tested by a qualified electrician at least every three years and replace blankets every ten years.

Wheat bags



Wheat bags can provide warmth, relief and comfort when used properly but, as with any product involving heat, there is a danger of fire and a risk of injury if care is not taken.

Wheat bags available in shops usually contain buckwheat. Because the moisture content and volume of filling is known, the manufacturer can recommend safe heating times. If you follow the recommended heating time, the bag should not overheat, cause a fire or burn you.

Homemade wheat bags can pose a greater fire and injury risk, because the moisture content and volume is not known, and the proper heating time can't be recommended. The use of a type of wheat other than buckwheat may increase the risks of overheating, fires and burns.

Top tips

- If you want to use wheat bags, buy from a shop rather than making your own and make sure there are clear instructions.
- Ensure that the wheat bag conforms to British Standards and always follow the manufacturer's instructions with care.
- Make sure that the wheat bag is not heated for too long, or at too high a temperature, and never leave unattended during the heating process.
- Check that the microwave turntable is working properly and is not obstructed in any way. This will ensure that the bag is heated safely, without 'hot spots' being formed.
- Don't add oils to wheat bags as, over time, you will saturate the cover cloth and create an added fire risk.
- Continual heating and drying of the wheat bag may overheat it to ignition point. When heating it in a microwave, add a cup or bowl of water on the turntable to reduce this risk.
- Don't use wheat bags or heat packs as bed warmers – only use for direct application to the body.
- Don't use if the bag shows any signs of over-use, e.g. discolouration, smell of burning or charring.
- Leave bags to cool on a non-combustible surface, such as a draining board, and never reheat bags until they are completely cooled (which could be up to two hours).

Safe and Well Visits- Home safety

The Devizes area has a dedicated Fire Service '**Safe and Well**' advisor who can visit people, within their own homes, advising on home safety and wellbeing.

A Safe and Well visit is **FREE** and normally lasts about one hour covering topics such as:

- Using electricity safely
- Cooking safely
- Making an escape plan
- What to do if there is a fire
- Keeping children safe
- Good practice – night time routine and other points relevant to you
- Identifying and discussing any further support the occupier may need

If you have thatch property, are living alone, have a young family, are over 65 or a smoker please get in contact with us. We want to help make you safer in your own home. If you or someone you know has mobility or sight and hearing impairments, please suggest a Safe and Well visit.

Visit <http://www.dwfire.org.uk/news/new-name-new-contact-details-same-service/> to book one.

Response

Total Incidents attended by DWFRS for Devizes Area; 30/08/18 – 31/10/18.

DWFRS have responded to 45 incidents in the Devizes area between the dates above.

Devizes Fire Station Responded to a total of 59 incidents County wide in the mentioned time period. Details are listed in the table below.

Category	Incidents in Devizes	Off of Station Ground incidents	Total
False Alarm	23	8	31
Fire	13	4	17
Special Service	9	2	11
Total	45	14	59
1st Pump Availability	99.5%		
2nd Pump Availability	61.9%		

Recent Notable Incidents

The Service has been busy throughout this reporting period. A fire that caused significant damage to a thatched property near Marlborough on 26 September is believed to have started accidentally. These are resource intensive, take a long time to extinguish and the incident was supported by a crew from Devizes from the beginning. Chimney fire incidents are beginning to increase now the temperature is dropping, when these can be prevented by taking simple steps detailed previously in this report.

Community Engagement

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service provides a free service called a Safe and Well visit. We will visit a person's home by appointment and discuss any safety issues in the home. We will also have a conversation about improving an individual's health and well-being.

If you or someone you know need a smoke alarm, some advice or are worried about what to do in an emergency, contact us for a free Safe and Well visit;

<http://www.dwfire.org.uk/safety/safe-and-well-visits/>

Community Safety Plan

DWFRS Community Safety Plan 2018-2022 outlines our plans for the future. It explains the diverse services we provide and how we plan to improve and deliver them over the four-year



period. The plan can be found on the DWFRS website <http://www.dwfire.org.uk/community-safety-plan/>

Darren Masini

Temporary Station Manager, Wiltshire West. Trowbridge, Bradford, Melksham & Devizes.

Email: Darren.masini@dwfire.org.uk

Tel: 07739899635/01722 691247

www.dwfire.org.uk