



NEWS RELEASE

Kevin W. Smith, Director of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 19, 2005

CONTACT:

Kristine Chapin, 651-297-1765

Robert Dahm, 651-215-0505

Alcohol
and Gambling
Enforcement

ARMER/911
Program

Bureau of Criminal
Apprehension

Driver
and Vehicle
Services

Homeland
Security and
Emergency
Management

Minnesota
State Patrol

Office of
Communications

Office of
Justice Programs

Office of
Traffic Safety

State Fire Marshal
and
Pipeline Safety

UP ON THE ROOFTOP, FLICK, FLICK, FLICK

Flaming Chimneys Destroy Homes and Holidays

ST. PAUL — Last year, 257 Minnesotans watched their cozy little fires turn into frightening and expensive nightmares as flames crawled up the chimney and spread. Chimney fires caused about \$1 million in damage in 2004 and made up 60 percent of all the heating-related fires in our state.

Chimney fires can start with a low rumbling sound and then explode onto the roof or they can smolder silently inside the chimney and build up intense heat that ignites combustible materials nearby. What these fires have in common is that they are preventable with proper chimney care.

Chimney fires are usually caused by buildup of creosote—the byproduct of condensation that takes place when hot smoke flows up a cool chimney. Creosote is highly combustible, and in large quantities, it will sustain a long, hot, destructive fire. Restricted air supply, unseasoned wood and cooler-than-normal chimney temperatures contribute to creosote buildup. There is no way to predict how long or how much you can safely use your fireplace; inspection is the only way to be sure.

Call a certified chimney sweep to inspect and clean your chimney annually, and have necessary repairs completed before you light a fire. In addition to regular cleaning, you can take these steps to prevent chimney fires:

- Use seasoned wood only. Dryness is more important than hardwood/softwood considerations.
- Build smaller, hotter fires that burn more completely and produce less smoke.
- Never burn cardboard, wrapping paper, trash or holiday trees; they can spark chimney fires.
- If you have a woodstove, install a stovepipe thermometer and adjust burning practices.

For information on selecting a chimney sweep, the chimney cleaning process and more, go to the Chimney Safety Institute of America Web site at www.csia.org.

###