

Common (and not so common) Chimney Problems and their Remedies - Billy Sweet

Billy Sweet the Chimney Sweep started his presentation with a crowd pleaser, he called us heroes! Chimneys are complex structures that vent toxic fumes. It is the work of home inspectors on the front lines to identify and report on chimney problems. Indeed, we are the heroes, and chimney sweeps do the yeoman's work!

Inspection types described in the "Chimney Inspections Explained for the Homeowner, A public Safety Bulletin from the Chimney Safety Institute of America":

A level 1 inspection is an inspection of the readily accessible portions of the chimney exterior, interior and accessible portions of the appliance and the chimney connection.

A level 2 inspection includes everything on a level 1 inspection, plus the accessible portion of the chimney exteriors and interior including attics, crawl spaces and basements. A level 2 inspection shall also include a visual inspection by video scanning or other means.

A Level 3 inspection includes the removal of certain components of the building or chimney where necessary.

Questions were flying fast and furious at the meeting but a few important ideas are captured here:

When a person replaces a boiler they should have a level 2 inspection.

Smoke chambers should be parged; it helps the draft to have a smooth surface

Step cracks can be from thermal shock, it happens easily

The industry is rethinking chimney caps. They are larger and extend out over the chimney. They now function more as a roof, shedding water out over the crown.

Heads-up – flue tile cracks can ultimately lead to collapse of the tiles and a blocked chimney.

And this brings us back to the heroes. According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, 200 people a year die from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by problems with venting of heating systems. Inspect those chimneys like our lives depend on it, because they do!

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