

Gas Fireplaces, Chimneys, and Woodstoves with Jeff Ludlow

Jeff Ludlow, of August West Chimney Fireplace Concepts wanted to ensure his presentation was directly related to home inspections. Augmented with photos, it was like a 1 hour chimney inspection! Here's the compelling list of ideas, observations, and recommendations:

Fogged gas fireplace doors – This is a white film created by combustion. There is a product called “White Off” a glass-ceramic cleaning cream that will remove the film.

Doors on wood burning fireplace – remind the buyer you don't use the doors when you have a fire going. They are strictly for when the fire dies down.

Doors on gas fireplaces can be drafty. The damper is locked open, or removed, so there is a lot of heat loss. Tell folks to read the manufacturer recommendations about when and how to use the doors. New construction doors should be gasketed.

Smoking fireplace- the flue may be too small, the throat too short –Possible solution: install a throat guard, or, add an exhaust fan to the cap

Damper problems – if the damper is broken or has failed in some way, add a top-sealing damper.

Creosote build-up in the smoke chamber – 3rd degree is shinny, 2nd degree is flakey and shiny, 1st degree looks like soot – Clean the chimney but if the chimney is heavily corbelled and has no liner, they may do a chemical clean, then parge coat. A parge coat isn't a liner, but it does seal the chamber.

Exposed flue or broken tiles - there should be a wythe wall of masonry between flues, however, it is ok to use “smoktite”.

Ash dump doors – it is extremely important to ensure the ash dump door stay shut. If a homeowner uses their fireplace and the dump door is open cinders could fall into the often cluttered basement.

Wooden form ties – Of course they should not be there but removal can be difficult. If the masonry above is deep enough, one may forgo removing the ties.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) developed standards for chimneys, fireplaces, vents and solid fuel burning appliances. In publication 211 they outline the various levels of chimney inspections. As we know, chimneys are large and complex structures and much of the chimney isn't visible. When in doubt, recommend the chimney professionals.

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