

## WOOD STOVES

It seems that every week we see home heating oil and gas prices continue to rise, along with day to day items following this upward trend. These cost increases have the inevitable effect of encouraging us to investigate and shop for something a little less expensive, such as wood burning stoves and fireplace inserts, to offset ever increasing demands on our wallets.

This winter, the building department has received more than its share of inquiries about these auxiliary heating units. Along with this old time appeal of burning wood come a few drawbacks, one of which is the very real risk of catastrophic fire. To minimize these risks, it's important to have a good maintenance schedule of cleaning the flue of creosote build-up and removing the ashes in a metal container. It is essential to have a supply of well-seasoned hardwood; oak, ash, hickory. Stay away from pine and fir as they are high in sap and will plug up a chimney in short order.

As with any heating unit, wood stoves require a Building Permit (and inspections) to assure that the stove and its installation meet the CT State Building Code requirements and the manufacturer's specifications at a minimum. The chimney is also a very important part of the system requiring re-lining of questionable chimney flues, along with accessible clean-outs and as an added precaution a spark arresting cap. Fireplace inserts have the added task of closing off the damper.

Whether new or used, some of the more obvious things are: be sure the stove is in good physical condition with no noticeable warping, cracking or missing parts. Check to see that any fire-brick lining is complete and secure and replace any cracked or missing tiles. It is recommended that properly installed carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are in place and functioning. Also recommended is that you purchase a new stove and have the company install it and have any flue concerns addressed at that time as part of your contract. These stoves weigh upwards of 200 pounds and can reach over 400 pounds, not something for just anybody to maneuver without the proper equipment and a good strong back or two! Following these safety tips can be the basis for a safe and warm winter season.