



Check chimneys and smoke alarms now

Is your chimney safe? How do you know? If your chimney was damaged in the August earthquake, you need to know whether it is safe or not before using your stove or fireplace this fall and winter. Broken or cracked chimneys can let heat, smoke and toxic gasses such as carbon monoxide into your home, and your home could even catch fire.

Some damage is obvious, and some is hidden:

- Check to see if bricks have fallen or the chimney is leaning.
- Look for shiny areas on your metal chimney pipe. This means the chimney moved during the earthquake.
- Look for cracks at joints where the chimney connects to the firebox, at the roofline and in the attic.
- Check for debris that may have fallen into the fireplace.
- Use a screwdriver to check the mortar between the bricks or stones. If it crumbles when you pick at it, the chimney may be a hazard.
- When in doubt, consult a licensed engineer or contractor. For the name of an inspector, call your insurance or mortgage company.

Carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors save lives. If it is possible that you have chimney damage, make sure you install these and inspect them regularly.

- Consider purchasing combination smoke/carbon monoxide detectors.
- Install them in sleeping areas and on every level of your home.
- Install them away from air vents.
- Interconnected smoke alarms are best because if one sounds, they all sound.
- Test smoke alarms monthly. Change alkaline batteries at least once a year. Use a date you already know as a reminder, such as your birthday or when you change your clocks.
- Prepare and practice a fire escape route with everyone in your home, including children.
- For more information go to www.usfa.dhs.gov/smokealarms

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