

Prevent fires in wood-burning stoves

According to David Morgan, safety engineer, NU/IANR, "Wood-burning stoves and fireplaces can help ease fuel bills, but take time to do the job right when installing and maintaining this equipment."

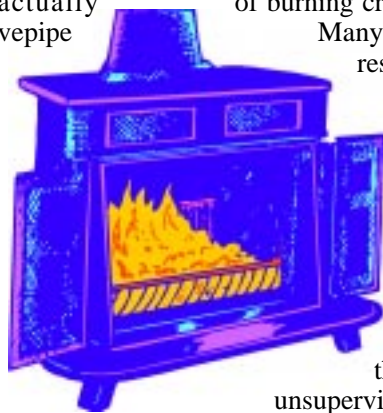
With more people buying wood-burning stoves than usual due to Y2K scares, special care needs to be given to proper installation. Wood-burning stoves should be installed by experienced people, such as heating and cooling professionals.

Chimney fires need not happen if proper installation and maintenance practices are done and there are good means for getting rid of combustion gases. Wood-burning stoves need a tight, well-designed and properly constructed chimney.

Chimney fires are indicated by a distinctive crackling noise in the chimney or a blowtorch rush of air into the chimney. The stovepipe or even the whole house may actually shake. The stovepipe

also may glow red hot, which means it has reached a temperature of at least 1,500 degrees F. Sparks and flames also may blow into the air.

If a chimney fire does occur, shut off stove draft and call the fire department. Dry chemical extinguishers may be helpful in holding the fire down until the



fire department gets to the scene. If water is available, stand on the ground and spray the roof to cut down on the possibility of a roof fire from glowing particles of burning creosote.

Many fires start when residents are away from home or have gone to sleep for the night. Wood-burning heaters should never be left burning alone unless you know how to prepare the heater for unsupervised time. Before going to bed or leaving the house, air intake vents should be adjusted to slow down the rate

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Water-saving adjustments

Summer heat means more water use. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates residential household water use at up to 80 gallons per person per day, but summer activities and heat increases that amount. Water use increases every year, which can burden some municipal and private sewage treatment systems.

The largest water users are showers and toilets, accounting for about two-thirds of the water used in an average household. Toilets use half of the inside household water supply.

Water and energy-saving devices can help save water.

Older shower heads typically use two to ten gallons per minute. Water-saving shower heads use only two to five gallons per minute.

In addition to a lower water flow for shampooing, new water-saving heads offer spray patterns such as mist, sharp, massage or pulsating. Some even

have a turn off switch.

Water pressure may affect low-flow shower heads. With low water pressure, select a low-flow shower head that delivers the water needed at low pressure or a low-flow shower head that can be switched off when the water pressure is low.

Cost of low-flow shower heads can range from \$7 to \$70. Savings in water and costs depend on the size of a household and the number and length of showers. Households taking two, four-minute showers each day may save enough hot water in two years to pay for a water-saving shower head.

Follow these other tips for saving water:

—Sink faucets can be equipped with flow control devices, which lowers water flow or shuts off automatically after a length of time, and foot pedal controls. Both of these can help save up to 25 percent of

water used.

—Fix leaks and maintain your water system. A one drop per second leak can waste up to 2,700 gallons of water per year. Leaky pipes not only waste water, but damage wood and create stains and rust.

—Washing a full load of clothes can use 20 to 57 gallons of water. Wash only full loads.

—Front-loading machines use less water than top-loading machines. Front-loading washers fill to just below the door opening, and items tumble in and out of water. They use less detergent, electricity and water (20-28 gallons). Savings in water and energy bills can add up from \$60 to \$100 per year.

—Don't run the faucet while doing other tasks for an extended period of time, such as brushing teeth.

—Use a timer or measuring

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Hemlock and livestock

Poison hemlock and water hemlock are abundant across the Midwest this year. These plants with white, umbrella-like flowers contain toxic compounds. If swallowed or digested

by grazing animals, hemlock can be lethal. Although hemlock usually isn't palatable to livestock, it can become so if altered by clipping or spraying. Be sure to provide animals with plenty

of water, salt and minerals. Lack of water or minerals sometimes causes animals to eat abnormally, which increases risk of consuming hemlock. (DJ)

Drinking water quality 'report cards'

Have you received your drinking water quality report card yet? According to DeLynn Hay, water resources and irrigation specialist and Sharon Skipton, extension educator, water quality, every public water supply system must provide its customers a report on the quality of its water supply. Large water systems will mail the water quality report to their customers. Smaller water systems may distribute the information with a

mailing, through a local newspaper or by other means. Reports also may be available on the Internet.

The first consumer confidence report must be distributed to all customers by October, 1999 and by July 1, each year thereafter.

The U.S. Congress revised the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1996 to require that public water supply systems provide annual water quality reports. A public

water supply is defined as a system that provides piped water for human consumption to at least 15 service connections or regularly serves at least 25 individuals. This will include municipal water systems, rural water systems and sanitary improvement district water systems.

The report will tell you the source of your drinking water. It

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Acreage Insights



Tractor safety tips (part 9)

Tractors are one of the most important pieces of equipment on a farm, yet they are also among the most dangerous. More deaths are caused by tractors than by any other type of farm accident. It is, imperative that tractor owners routinely check their tractors and keep in mind the following safety guidelines:

If the operator's tractor has a Rollover Protection System (ROPS) cab or rollbar, then the seatbelt must be worn. There has been only one death in the United States where a ROPS was properly installed and the seatbelt was worn. The operator went off a 14 foot bridge and landed upside down. There have been many deaths when ROPS were present, but the seatbelt was not worn. It is more dangerous to have a ROPS and not wear the seatbelt than it is not to have a ROPS.

The only time seatbelts should not be worn is when a ROPS is not present on the tractor allowing the operator a chance to escape. Tractors without a ROPS tend to roll over 180 degrees or more (there is no room for an operator when the tractor is upside down). A tractor with a ROPS, roll over approximately 90 degrees. The safest protection is to have a ROPS and a seatbelt installed on the tractor and wear the seatbelt. (DJ)



Mulch-mowing your lawn

Traditional lawn mowing results in the repeated problem of grass clipping disposal.

Disposing of clippings through curbside pickup burdens our landfills. In fact, many communities now refuse to collect yard wastes.

Letting grass clippings fall where they may, actually can make a lawn healthier by returning vital nitrogen to the soil, effectively enriching your lawn at every mowing.

If leaving clippings on the lawn, mow more often. A side discharge mower keeps clippings to a minimum and spreads them evenly over your lawn, so you won't need to rake.

If using a bagging attachment, clippings can be transferred to a compost pile that provides natural, organically-



enriched earth for feeding vegetables and plants later on.

Besides mowing, mulching mowers and mulching blade attachments put grass clippings to work for you. By cutting and then recutting grass, a mulching blade produces fine particles that can barely be seen. These small particles decompose quickly, returning nutrients to your lawn. (DJ)

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