

## Safety Smarts

### The Heat is On, Love your Woodstove

By: Patrice Hampson, Peterborough Fire & Rescue

With the abundance of snow and frigid temperatures we've experienced this season, many Peterborough residents are digging into their woodpiles and making use of their woodstoves, myself included. It's important to be certain your woodstove is ready prior to using it the first time out. For those of you who use a woodstove as a back-up heat source, it is equally important to follow the same safety tips: If you haven't already, make sure your chimney is cleared of any creosote or other debris. Keep all flammable materials at least 3 feet from the stove and place a screen around the stove to prevent children and pets and yourself from accidental burns. (Years ago, my curious dog obtained a bit of a snout burn because I ignored this last piece of advice.) Never ever use a flammable liquid to start or revive a fire in the stove as this kind of impatient gesture has caused numerous, senseless injuries. Remember, your stove isn't an outdoor charcoal grill; it's an interior heating fixture. Burn only dry, well-seasoned wood such as oak, ash and maple. Trash is not a fuel option.

I remember as a little girl spotting a chimney fire just across our street. After calling the fire department, my dad alerted our neighbors who had been in their living room watching television, oblivious that an inferno was well underway. They had no idea the loud roaring and sucking noises were coming from their chimney; rather, they thought it was the cheers of the crowd from the televised Monday night football game. If you hear these noises coming from your chimney and suspect a chimney fire, proceed as follows: cut off the fire's air supply by closing any intake vents in the firebox. Close the damper. Get everyone out of the house. Go to a neighbor's to call the fire department.

Since January 1st, Peterborough Fire & Rescue have responded to three chimney fires that fortunately have not extended to tragic structure fires.

Now that I've imparted a little advice with regards to using and not misusing your woodstove, go ahead and retrieve some more wood from your woodpiles and enjoy the warmth of your stove. If you have any questions, feel free to call the Peterborough Fire & Rescue at 924-8090, or your local fire department.