

Selling Your Home? Hire A Chimney Sweep

By Jim Gillam

How can a chimney sweep help you sell your home? With all the details you need to attend to right now, why would you want to choose this time to hire a chimney sweep?

When preparing to buy or sell a home with a combustion appliance, be it a furnace, fireplace or woodstove, the standards of the National Fire Protection Association recommend obtaining a thorough inspection of the chimney and venting systems. The condition of the chimney may be a factor in the sale.

If any problems are discovered, it may be wise to fix them before putting the house on the market. Or, if you choose not to make repairs now, you are in a position to make an honest disclosure of the home's condition as required by law.

The unfortunate fact is that many chimneys, fireplaces and heating appliance installations do not meet safety standards. Many have deteriorated from years of weather and use. Many were incorrectly built or installed in the first place.

Common problems include inadequate distances between hot surfaces and burnable materials in the structure and lack of an appropriate liner inside the chimney.

Inspection by a Chimney Professional

A competent professional chimney sweep is usually the person best qualified to inspect your chimney and fireplace or hearth appliance.

Fully equipped modern chimney sweeps often carry video scanning equipment that can show the condition of the inside of your flues and directly pinpoint problems. A competent chimney professional will also be able to inform you of building codes and product listings applicable to your situation.

Today's well informed chimney professionals continually increase their knowledge and skill level by reading professional journals such as *The Chimney Sweep News* and attending seminars and workshops provided by organizations such as the National Chimney Sweep Guild, Chimney Safety Institute of America, National Fireplace Institute, state and regional associations, and private instructors.

Although many people expect home inspectors to look at chimneys, the details of a chimney inspection are beyond the normal scope of a home inspection. The various standards of practice that govern home inspectors generally require them to inspect readily accessible areas that are exposed to view. Inspectors are not required to climb on top of chimneys or take off chimney caps. In fact ASHI Standard 9.3.D.1 specifically says, "The inspector is NOT required to observe the interior of flues."



Illustrations by Kyle McQueen

Many home inspectors will recommend in writing that the chimney be cleaned and inspected by a professional chimney sweep prior to closing on the home.

Make your appointment for the chimney cleaning and inspection as soon as possible. Be sure to tell the inspector that you are preparing your house for



sale. The last thing you want is for problems to be discovered at the last minute that might complicate the sale of your home!

Finding a Capable Chimney Professional

Because proper chimney maintenance can help protect people from the dangers of house fires and carbon monoxide poisonings, it is important to choose your chimney professional wisely. Before you hire a chimney sweep, find out whether chimney sweeps are required to have a license in the community where you live. If they do, then your first step is to verify that any companies you're considering have valid licenses.

Ask around in your community for a chimney sweep with a good reputation. A well-earned good reputation is the public's "seal of approval."

Chimney professionals also demonstrate their competency through certification by the Chimney Safety Institute of America (CSIA), the National Fireplace Institute (for installers of hearth appliances), the Wood Energy Technology Transfer program in Canada, and some state chimney sweep organizations. A list of CSIA Certified Chimney Sweeps is available at www.csia.org.