

## **Neglected chimneys pose carbon monoxide, chimney fire threat**

A simple chimney cleaning could have saved the lives of an Ohio family of five killed by carbon monoxide poisoning last December, according to the Chimney Safety Institute of America (CSIA). Now that it's nearly heating season again, CSIA is working to prevent similar tragedies by educating homeowners during National Chimney Safety Week, September 29- October 5, about the dangers of neglected chimneys.

The Ohio family succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning after a bird's nest blocks the chimney venting the family's furnace. Any blockage in a chimney, including bird's nests or other debris, prevents the furnace or boiler from receiving enough air for combustion, causing carbon monoxide to form. If the chimney is blocked, the furnace's exhaust can't pass through to the outside; instead, the toxic fumes back up into the home.

"Because people cannot smell or see carbon monoxide, it poses a serious home safety hazard," said CSIA Executive Director Joanne Calderon. "A yearly inspection of the chimney and the heating unit can help prevent unnecessary deaths."

Carbon monoxide detectors can warn the household that the gas is present, but annual chimney maintenance means that blockages and other defects can be removed or repaired before a problem occurs. Chimney cleaning can also help prevent chimney fires and water damage, and help a furnace or boiler work more efficiently.

Both the National Fire Protection Association and the Chimney Safety Institute of America recommend annual evaluations of all chimneys, whether they vent a fireplace, wood stove or a furnace or boiler.

For a safe and efficient home heating season, CSIA recommends the following:

**Have your chimney checked every year**—and cleaned as needed—no matter what kind of fuel is used to heat your home. This safety measure can also reveal potential problems before they become costly or dangerous. An annual inspection by a CSIA Certified Sweep is the key to safe and efficient home heating.

**Before installing a new heating unit (a furnace, boiler or wood stove)** into an *existing* chimney, have the chimney checked. Modern heating units have very specific venting requirements. An improper match can cause deterioration of the chimney leading to blockages, condensation damage, or worse.

**Install a carbon monoxide detector.** If a blockage occurs, or if there is a problem with the heating unit itself, the detector will warn the household that carbon monoxide is present.

Ask for a CSIA Certified Chimney Sweep. Chimney professionals certify through CSIA and carry photo ID badges with a personal certification number and expiration date. CSIA is dedicated to educating the public about heating and venting safety.

For more information about chimney safety, or for a list of CSIA Certified Sweeps, write to CSIA, 16021 Industrial Drive, Suite 8, Gaithersburg, MD 20877 or call (800) 536-0118.