



Energy Tip Of The Month: Maintaining Your Wood or Pellet Burning System

To keep your wood or pellet burning system operating efficiently and safely, you'll need to maintain it on a regular basis. Every year, preferably before each heating season, have a chimney sweep certified by the Chimney Safety Institute of America <http://www.csia.org> inspect your wood burning system. In addition to cleaning the chimney, a certified chimney sweep should have the knowledge to help make sure your appliance, hearth, connecting pipe, air inlets, chimney, and all other components are functioning efficiently and safely.

Catalytic combustors need to be inspected after every two cords of wood burned, and replaced according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Most catalytic stoves or inserts have a place for a thermometer to help you check the combustor. The catalytic cell is removable and replaceable and costs between \$75 and \$160. Catalysts in new models, especially those made since 2005, should only need changing once every 5 – 8 years if burning seasoned wood. Older catalytic stoves made prior to 2000 need to be checked more often and catalysts need to be replaced more often.

Cleaning out the inside of a wood stove with a wire brush periodically will also help the wood burning appliance heat more efficiently. Even one-tenth of an inch of soot can drop the heat transfer efficiency of the metal by 50%.

For pellet fuel appliances, it is very important to follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation and maintenance. Inspect fans and motors regularly, and maintain them properly. Manufacturers advise removing unused pellets from the stove hopper and feed system at the end of the heating season. This reduces the chance of rusting, which can cause expensive damage to the appliance. It also minimizes difficulties in lighting the appliance at the start of the next heating season. Clean the flue vent on a regular basis to prevent soot buildup.