

What to Expect When You Get Your Chimney Swept

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Don't be surprised if you can't reach anything but an answering machine when you call for an appointment with a chimney sweep, especially if you are calling between September and December. Most chimney professionals are extremely busy during the autumn months. Many highly competent companies in the chimney service business are operated by a single individual or with very few employees, and due to the demands of the business do not answer their telephones with a live operator. But you should expect a callback by the next morning.

Price

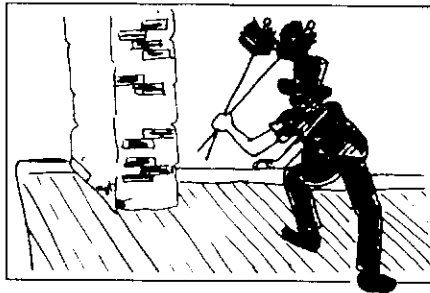
Ask around in your community for a chimney sweep with a good reputation. A well-earned good reputation is the public's "seal of approval."

Beware of the lowest price. Competent chimney professionals invest in quality equipment, technical education and insurance for your protection. Companies offering a cut rate are much less likely to have made these investments.

Making the Appointment

Your company may give you a general time for the appointment such as between 10am and noon. If they haven't called you to confirm the appointment by the previous day, it would be a good idea to call them for confirmation.

Refrain from building a fire in your fireplace or wood stove for at least 24 hours to allow it to



cool before the appointment. There is nothing more frustrating to chimney sweeps than to arrive at a customer's house ready to work and find the system is too hot to service.

Be home at the appointed time and watch for their arrival.

At the Door

Many chimney sweep companies send out individual technicians while others work in pairs. The sweep may greet you at the door wearing a top hat, upholding a tradition that goes back hundreds of years. Or he or she may be dressed similarly to other modern service technicians. Either way, the chimney sweep should be courteous and presentable.

Credentials

Chimney professionals 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.

Technicians who have passed the CSIA Certified Chimney Sweep® exam carry a laminated identification badge. If you are unfamiliar with the company you are hiring, it may be wise to ask to see the technician's badge. Unfortunately, false claims of certification are a fairly common complaint within the chimney service profession. A list of CSIA Certified Chimney Sweeps is available at www.csia.org.

Cleanliness

After surveying the job to be done, the sweep will secure the work area, protecting it from ash, soot and dust. Furniture will be moved

if necessary. To protect your floor, the sweep will place a drop cloth on the floor in front of the fireplace or wood stove. Some companies will even lay down rug runners all the way from the front door to the fireplace.

Your sweep should use a professional vacuum to control ash and soot.

Routine cleaning of the flue may be done either from below or from the roof using a brush attached to a flexible rod system. Some chimney professionals use a rotary system with a special brush and rods attached to a heavy-duty electric drill. All of the loosened soot and creosote should be contained and none should escape into the air of your living area or onto your furnishings. The sweep will remove the loosened soot and creosote from the system with a vacuum or shovel.

When the job is completed, you should see no telltale soot or ash, no sign that anyone has been inside your house working in the cinders.



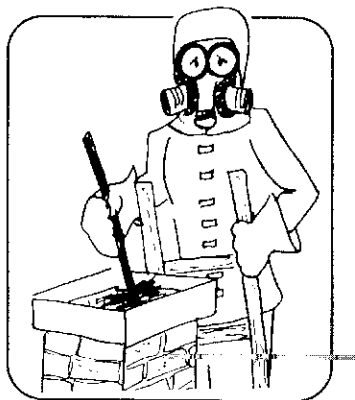
Condition Report

Your sweep may report on the condition of your fireplace chimney and/or heating appliance exhaust system. Many chimney professionals are equipped with specialized cameras for viewing the interior of the system.

Careful inspection of the chimney may reveal problems that could be potentially hazardous. Take your chimney professional's advice seriously if problems are discovered.

Forward Scheduling

Because chimney professionals can count on being overwhelmed with business during the autumn months, many offer Forward Scheduling to their preferred customers. At the end of the job when your sweep presents the bill, ask if you can make an appointment for sometime in the spring or summer. Many chimney companies carry calendars for a year or two in advance and can schedule your next appointment for a time that is most convenient for you.



Well-equipped modern chimney sweeps wear protective gear and may use a video camera to examine the interior of your chimney.