



HOT NEWS

Genesee Fire & Rescue 23455 Currant Dr. Golden CO 80401 (303) 526-1230

Genesee Fire & Rescue is reminding residents to make sure they have their chimneys and fireplaces inspected and cleaned at least once a year by a licensed professional.

The reminder comes on the heels of two residential fires within three weeks of each other in January. Both fires started in the fireplace/chimney area.

“We’re not sure if those chimneys had been inspected or cleaned, but it’s gotten our attention,” said Genesee Fire Chief Carlton Babbs. “The best way to protect yourself – and we’re not saying it’s fail safe – is to have them inspected and cleaned at least once a year.”

The inspection of chimneys is crucial to detect problems with the venting system. Heating appliances and their venting systems can be hazardous when not properly installed or when damage or deterioration has occurred. Even if you don’t use your chimney much, animals may build nests in the flue or there may be other types of deterioration that could make the chimney unsafe to use. Gas fireplaces also should be checked because even though gas is generally a clean burning fuel, the chimney can become non-functional from bird nests or other debris blocking the flue, according to the Chimney Safety Institute of America.

Babbs said the fire box inside your home – where you actually see your fire burning – also should be checked annually. The box may be mounted on wood framing, which can ignite and cause a fire if not properly maintained.

“All it takes is a little pinpoint hole (in the fire box) for that heat to get out,” Babbs said. “It doesn’t take much.”

Genesee firefighters battled two chimney fires in January. In the first, on Jan 2, Lt. Michael Sparks was driving home after picking up a pizza for his family, when he spotted a chimney on fire on Arrow Wood Drive. Sparks notified the homeowner, as well as a neighbor across the street, and then used hand tools to pull apart the chimney box. The neighbor used a garden hose to staunch the flames.

“They stopped the seat of the fire right there,” Babbs said.

It took responding firefighters about six minutes to bring the blaze under control. Two Genesee firefighters sustained minor injuries fighting the fire. Damage was estimated at about \$30,000.

The second fire happened on Jan. 24. It was spotted at 3:37 a.m. by a newspaper delivery man. The man honked his horn to awaken the homeowner, who evacuated safely. It took crews from Genesee Fire, Foothills Fire, Evergreen Fire and Highlands Rescue about 20 minutes to bring the fire on Genesee Village Road under control. Residents of two nearby homes were temporarily evacuated, but the fire was contained to the home where it started. Damage was estimated to be at least \$35,000.

“We can’t emphasize enough how critically important it is for you to get your fireplace and chimney inspected and cleaned,” Babbs said.

For more information on how to hire a chimney sweep, visit the website for the Chimney Safety Institute of America at www.csia.org.

For additional information about chimney fires and how to prevent them, call Genesee Fire at 303-526-1230, or visit the Genesee Fire website at www.geneseefire.org.