

# LIVING GREEN NEWS

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## FIREPLACE SAFETY

The weather is getting colder and many of us are thinking about starting a fire in the fireplace. Great idea – Right?? After all, wood burning and gas fireplaces are designed to safely provide years of comfort, warmth and relaxation. However, for a fireplace to do its job, it requires regular maintenance and proper operation. Before you light the first fire of the season, there are a few important safety tips to remember.

### Wood burning Fireplace Safety and Maintenance Tips

#### Preventive Maintenance:

- The chimney and firebox should be inspected annually and cleaned as necessary to ensure it's clear of obstructions and creosote. Repairs may be necessary. All of this must be done by a professional chimney sweep.
- If you don't already have one, have a cap installed at the top of the chimney to avoid the possibility that debris or animals can block the chimney.
- Install both a smoke and carbon monoxide detector. Most detectors have batteries, so they must be checked often. A good rule of thumb is to check them when the time changes in the Spring and in the Fall. Replace if necessary.
- Keep a fire extinguisher on hand. Most hardware and home improvement stores carry them. There are many types, so be sure to read the information that comes with the extinguisher. It wouldn't hurt to talk to a local fireman for his advice.
- Make sure you have a proper screen and/or door for the fireplace opening and that it is installed correctly.
- Check the area around the fireplace. Is it clear of furniture, books, newspapers, and other potentially flammable materials? Some professionals say a good rule is two feet away.

#### Lighting The Fire:

- ▼ Open the damper !!!!
- ▼ Clean out ashes from previous fires
- ▼ Build a safe fire using seasoned firewood cut to the correct length
- ▼ Use a fireplace grate
- ▼ Crumble paper on the grate inside the fireplace and cover it with kindling or a manufactured fire starter
- ▼ Once the kindling or fire start is burning brightly, add dry seasoned wood to the fire and shut the fire screen

- ▼ Do not overload the fireplace so the fire wood doesn't tumble out. A couple of logs at a time will work fine
- ▼ Manufactured fire logs purchased from a grocery or hardware store is a good alternative and does not require paper to get the fire started
- ▼ Keep glass doors open during the fire
- ▼ Always close the fire screen while a fire is going
- ▼ Use fireplace tools to tend the fire

#### Use Common Sense:

- ✓ Never burn garbage, rolled newspapers, charcoal, or plastic in the fireplace
- ✓ Never use gasoline or any liquid accelerant to help start a fire
- ✓ Keep small children and pets away from the fireplace
- ✓ **Never leave a fire unattended**
- ✓ Don't close the damper until the embers have completely stopped burning
- ✓ Make sure the fire is completely out before going to bed or leaving the house
- ✓ Never burn a Christmas tree in the fireplace
- ✓ When cleaning the fireplace, store ashes in a **non-combustible container** with a tightly fitting lid and place the container away from the house

#### Gas Fireplace Safety:

- ◆ Professional installation by a qualified technician is essential to the proper performance and safety of a hearth product and its venting system. **This is not a job for the do it yourself person.**
- ◆ In order to understand the proper operation of your gas hearth product, read the manufacturer's instruction manual

#### Gas Fireplace Maintenance Tips:

- Gas fireplaces also require routine maintenance and service to ensure their proper working order. The best person to do this is a specialty retailer who is trained and certified in the maintenance of gas fireplaces. There are several steps required to ensure your system is performing properly and must be left up to a professional.
- **Note:** A gas fireplace system that is not functioning properly can have serious consequences such as Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, so install a carbon monoxide detector to protect your family.

# NOVEMBER

## Dates to Remember:

### **November 11th Veterans Day (originally known as Armistice Day):**

In 1918, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day in the eleventh month, the world rejoiced and celebrated. After four years of bitter war, an armistice was signed. The “war to end all wars” was over. In 1921, an unknown World War I American soldier was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Similar ceremonies occurred in England and France. These memorial gestures all took place on November 11, giving universal recognition to the celebrated ending of World War I fighting at 11 a.m... Armistice Day officially received its name in America in 1926 through a Congressional resolution.

In 1954, President Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11th as Veterans Day, recognizing that peace was equally preserved by veterans of WW II and Korea. Congress was requested to make this day an occasion to honor those who have served America in all wars.

In 1968 a law was passed changing the national commemoration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent, however, that November 11th was a date of historic significance to many Americans. Therefore, in 1978 Congress returned the observance to its traditional date.

### **November 22, 1963 – The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy:**

On this date, when he was hardly past his first thousand days in office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was killed by an assassin's bullets as his motorcade wound through Dallas, Texas. Kennedy was the youngest man elected President and he was the youngest to die.

His Inaugural Address offered the memorable injunction: “Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.”

His economic programs launched the country on its longest sustained expansion since WW II; before his death, he laid plans for a massive assault on persisting pockets of privation and poverty. He also took vigorous action in the cause of equal rights, calling for new civil rights legislation. His vision of America extended to the quality of the national culture and the central role of the arts in a vital society.

### **Thanksgiving:**

After their first harvest, the colonists of the Plymouth Plantation held a celebration of food and feasting in the fall of 1621. Indian chiefs Massasoit, Squanto and Samoset joined in the celebration with ninety of their men in the three-day event.

The first recorded Thanksgiving observance was held on June 29, 1671 at Charlestown, Massachusetts by proclamation of the town's governing council.

The very first Thanksgiving proclamation was signed by President George Washington on October 14, 1789. It set aside Thursday, November 26 as “A Day of Publick Thanksgiving and Prayer.” While there were Thanksgiving observances in America both before and after Washington's proclamation, this represents the first to be so designated by the new national government.

On October 3, 1863 President Abraham Lincoln signed his Thanksgiving Proclamation, stating “...I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens...”

<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/thanks.htm> is the link to read President Lincoln's entire proclamation.

In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt moved the holiday to the third Thursday of November (to extend the Christmas shopping season and boost the economy). After a storm of protest, Roosevelt changed the holiday again in 1941 to the fourth Thursday in November, where it stands today.