



## IS YOUR CHIMNEY SAFE FOR WINTER?

As temperatures start to drop, specialist agricultural insurer Achmea Australia is encouraging rural communities to check their chimneys and flues before lighting their next fire.

Achmea Australia Farm Insurance Specialist Rebecca Muir said chimney fires can be a common but mostly preventable risk.

“Chimney fires are mainly caused by a build-up of creosote, a highly flammable residue that accumulates on the flue wall, or debris left by nesting animals, particularly if your fireplace has been sitting unused over summer,” Rebecca said.

“If not cleaned and properly maintained, any build-up of creosote or debris can ignite within the flue,” Rebecca said. “Chimney fires can spread rapidly within the roof space, which can cause major structural damage, the loss of your home or worse, lives.”

“A clean, well-maintained chimney can reduce the risk of fire significantly,” said Rebecca. “Now is the time to take action that could save your life, your family, and your home this winter.”

“If you are unsure how to clean and check your chimney yourself, consider calling in a qualified professional annually who can also inspect for damage or deterioration,” said Rebecca.

“Importantly, always check that your smoke alarms and fire extinguishers are working,” Rebecca said.

Additional steps that can reduce the risk of chimney fires include:

- Only burn clean, dried wood, as creosote can build up quicker if you are using green wood or treated timbers.
- Limit the use of the damper to create a ‘slow burn’, as this can speed up the deposits of creosote.
- Never use petroleum products such as petrol, kerosene, or diesel to start a fire.
- Never leave a fireplace unattended and never leave children or pets unsupervised around an open fire or slow combustion heaters.
- Ensure you are using safety guards/screens and that they are in good working order.
- Conduct a mid-season inspection to remove any built-up creosote, particularly if you use your chimney regularly.

### What to do in the event of a chimney fire

- Follow your state/territory Home Fire Escape Plan to develop your Escape Plan today.
- In an emergency, always call 000.

**ENDS**



### **About Achmea Australia**

Achmea Australia is part of the Achmea Group, which is one of the largest insurance companies in the Netherlands. The Achmea Group has over 10 million clients worldwide and is fully dedicated to farm insurance in Australia.

Insurance issued by Achmea Schadeverzekeringen N.V. (Achmea) ABN 86 158 237 702 AFSL 433984.

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