



MR SWEEP CHIMNEYS & STOVES

THE COMPLETE LOG BURNER OWNER'S GUIDE

Everything you need to know about using, caring for
and maintaining your wood-burning stove
Serving Staffordshire & surrounding areas
Telephone: 07380 805 327

WELCOME TO MR SWEEP

There is nothing quite like the warmth, comfort and atmosphere of a real wood-burning stove.

Whether your stove is the centrepiece of your living room, a supplementary source of heating or simply something you enjoy on a cold winter evening, looking after it properly is important.

A stove that is correctly installed, properly maintained and operated as intended can provide many years of enjoyment.

However, responsible stove ownership involves more than lighting a fire and putting logs on it.

Your **stove, chimney, flue, fuel and the way you operate the appliance all work together.**

This guide has been produced by **Mr Sweep Chimneys & Stoves** to help homeowners across Staffordshire understand the basics of safe and responsible log-burner ownership.

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1. KNOW YOUR STOVE

The first step to becoming a responsible stove owner is knowing exactly what appliance you have.

If you've recently moved into a property with a stove, don't assume that everything is ready for immediate use.

Try to establish:

- The manufacturer.
- The model.
- The approximate age.
- Whether it is a wood-burning or multi-fuel appliance.
- The recommended heat output.
- The fuels it is designed to burn.
- When it was installed.
- Who installed it.
- When the chimney was last swept.
- Whether the chimney has been lined.
- Whether you have installation or commissioning documentation.

Keep the manufacturer's instructions

Your stove manufacturer's instructions are one of the most important documents you should have.

They will tell you how your particular appliance is designed to operate and what fuels it can use.

They may also provide information about:

- Maximum fuel loads.
- Recommended log sizes.
- Air controls.
- Operating temperatures.
- Cleaning.
- Maintenance.
- Replacement parts.

If you don't have the manual, identify the make and model and try to obtain the correct instructions from the manufacturer.

MR SWEEP TIP

Never assume that because something burns, it is suitable for your stove.

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

2. WOOD-BURNING OR MULTI-FUEL?

The terms "log burner", "wood burner" and "multi-fuel stove" are sometimes used interchangeably, but there are important differences.

Wood-burning stoves

Wood-burning appliances are designed primarily for burning firewood.

The appliance will have been designed around the characteristics of wood as a fuel.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding how the fire should be built and operated.

Multi-fuel stoves

Multi-fuel appliances are designed to burn certain approved solid fuels as well as wood.

However, "multi-fuel" does **not** mean that every type of solid fuel can be burned.

Always check the manufacturer's approved fuel list.

Remember

Wood-burning stove = use suitable firewood.

Multi-fuel stove = use only fuels approved for your appliance.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF DRY FIREWOOD

If you have a wood-burning stove, the quality of your firewood makes a significant difference.

One of the biggest mistakes we see is the use of wood that is too wet.

Wet or poorly seasoned wood can result in:

- More smoke.
- Less useful heat.
- Poorer combustion.
- Increased deposits within the flue.
- More condensation.
- A dirtier stove and chimney.

For domestic firewood in England, wood sold to households in quantities below 2 cubic metres must meet the applicable **Ready to Burn** requirements, including a moisture content of 20% or less.

How can you check your logs?

A moisture meter is a simple and relatively inexpensive tool that can help you check the moisture content of your firewood.

Don't rely solely on appearance.

A log can look dry on the outside while still containing considerable moisture internally.

MR SWEEP TIP

If you regularly use your stove, a good-quality moisture meter is one of the most useful accessories you can own.

4. CHOOSING THE RIGHT LOGS

When purchasing firewood, buy from a reputable supplier.

Look for properly dried firewood intended for domestic burning.

Good logs should be:

- Dry.

- Properly seasoned or dried.
- Appropriate for your appliance.
- Free from paint.
- Free from preservatives.
- Free from chemicals and contaminants.

Don't burn waste wood

There is a common misconception that if something is made from wood, it is automatically suitable for a log burner.

It isn't.

The treatment, paint, glue, preservative or other material contained within the wood can make it unsuitable.

If you don't know exactly what a piece of timber has been treated with, **don't burn it**.

5. STORING YOUR FIREWOOD

Even if you buy properly dried firewood, you can undo the good work by storing it incorrectly.

Your logs need to stay dry.

Ideally, store firewood:

- Off the ground.
- Under suitable cover.
- In a well-ventilated area.
- Protected from prolonged rain.
- Where air can circulate around the logs.

Avoid completely sealing damp logs inside an unventilated shed.

Dry and ventilated

That's the key.

A log store that keeps the rain off while allowing plenty of airflow is ideal.

MR SWEEP TIP

Don't simply ask:

"Are my logs covered?"

Ask:

"Are my logs dry AND well ventilated?"

6. WHAT SHOULD YOU NEVER BURN?

Your stove is designed for approved fuels.

It is **not a household waste incinerator**.

Never burn unsuitable materials simply because they happen to fit inside the stove.

Do not burn:

- Household rubbish.
- Plastic.
- Painted timber.
- Treated timber.
- Old fence panels.
- Preserved timber.

- MDF.
- Chipboard.
- Laminated boards.
- Furniture.
- Materials containing glues.
- Materials containing chemicals.
- Timber treated with preservatives.
- Waste wood of unknown origin.

Burning inappropriate materials can produce harmful emissions and may contribute to deposits or damage within the appliance and chimney.

What about old furniture?

Don't use your stove to dispose of unwanted furniture.

Furniture can contain:

- Paint.
- Varnish.
- Adhesives.
- Foam.
- Plastic.
- Laminated materials.
- Treated timber.

Even if the furniture looks like solid wood, it may contain other materials.

7. WHAT ABOUT PALLETS?

Pallets are another common question.

The fact that a pallet is made from wood does **not** automatically mean that it is suitable for burning.

Pallets can be:

- Treated.
- Contaminated.
- Painted or marked.
- Exposed to chemicals or other substances.
- Unsuitable for domestic stove use.

Unless you know that the material is suitable for your particular appliance and permitted for domestic burning, don't put it in your stove.

8. HOW TO LIGHT YOUR STOVE

Always follow your stove manufacturer's instructions.

Different appliances have different designs, controls and recommended methods of operation.

Before lighting your stove, check:

- The stove is in good condition.
- The glass is not cracked.
- The door closes correctly.
- The door seal appears intact.
- The firebricks are in reasonable condition.

- You have suitable dry fuel.
- Your carbon monoxide alarm is working.

Lighting the fire

Use appropriate dry kindling and suitable firelighters.

Allow the fire to establish properly.

The appliance needs an adequate supply of air to burn correctly.

Once the fire is established and the stove has reached its normal operating temperature, adjust the air controls according to the manufacturer's instructions.

9. DON'T CONSTANTLY SMOULDER YOUR FIRE

Many stove owners want their logs to last as long as possible.

However, deliberately restricting the air supply excessively can cause the fire to burn poorly.

A poorly burning fire can produce excessive smoke and contribute to unwanted deposits within the flue.

Your stove has been designed to operate within a particular range.

The objective isn't:

"Make one load of logs last all night."

The objective is:

"Operate the appliance correctly and efficiently."

Learn how your particular stove behaves and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

10. DON'T OVERLOAD YOUR STOVE

More logs do not necessarily mean more heat.

Every stove has a recommended fuel load.

Overloading an appliance can cause it to operate at excessive temperatures and may damage components.

Always follow the manufacturer's guidance regarding:

- Maximum fuel load.
- Log size.
- Number of logs.
- Air settings.
- Operating temperature.

If you don't know the recommended fuel load for your stove, check the manual.

11. SMOKE CONTROL AREAS

Smoke Control Areas are particularly important for homeowners in Staffordshire.

The rules do **not** apply identically across the whole county.

A Smoke Control Area is an area where restrictions apply to smoke emissions from chimneys.

Within these areas, there are restrictions on the fuels that may be burned and how appliances can be used.

Certain appliances are approved for use in Smoke Control Areas, subject to the relevant requirements.

Staffordshire

For example, **Stoke-on-Trent is a Smoke Control Area.**

However, other parts of Staffordshire have different arrangements.

Stafford Borough currently states that it has no Smoke Control Areas, while Staffordshire Moorlands has designated Smoke Control Areas.

Why does this matter?

If you:

- Buy a new stove.
- Move house.
- Replace an appliance.
- Change your fuel.
- Start using an existing stove again.

you should check the rules applying to your particular property.

MR SWEEP TIP

Never assume that because your neighbour can burn a particular fuel, you can too.

Check the rules applying to your own address.

12. BUYING A NEW STOVE?

If you're thinking about buying a log burner, don't start with the appearance.

Start with the property.

You need to consider:

- Room size.
- Required heat output.
- Existing chimney.
- Flue arrangement.
- Ventilation.
- Hearth requirements.
- Appliance clearances.
- Permitted fuels.
- Smoke Control Area status.
- Installation requirements.
- Maintenance requirements.

Don't buy the stove first

This is one of our biggest pieces of advice.

It can be tempting to walk into a showroom, choose the stove you like and then work out how to install it.

The better approach is to establish what your property and chimney require **before purchasing the appliance.**

Getting professional advice beforehand can help prevent expensive mistakes.

13. YOUR CHIMNEY AND FLUE

Your chimney is a vital part of the complete installation.

It is responsible for safely carrying combustion gases away from your home.

An existing chimney is not automatically suitable for every new stove.

It may require:

- Sweeping.
- Inspection.
- Testing.
- Repair.
- Lining.
- Other remedial work.

An old chimney isn't necessarily a good chimney

Even if a fireplace or previous stove has been used for years, circumstances may have changed.

The chimney could have:

- Deteriorated.
- Become blocked.
- Developed structural problems.
- Been altered.
- Been affected by moisture.
- Had an old liner deteriorate.

If you're installing a new appliance, get the chimney properly assessed.

14. WHY CHIMNEY SWEEPING MATTERS

Whenever you burn solid fuel, combustion products are produced.

Over time, soot and other deposits can accumulate inside the chimney or flue.

Regular sweeping removes accumulated deposits and provides an opportunity for the chimney sweep to identify obvious problems.

Sweeping is therefore an important part of responsible stove ownership.

Sweeping can help:

- Keep the flue clear.
- Remove accumulated soot and deposits.
- Reduce the risk associated with blocked flues.
- Identify potential problems.
- Maintain the chimney as part of your regular home maintenance.

However, sweeping isn't a substitute for a full structural survey or specialist inspection where one is required.

15. HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOUR CHIMNEY BE SWEPT?

There isn't necessarily one sweeping interval that is suitable for every chimney and every household.

The appropriate frequency can depend on:

- What fuel you burn.
- How frequently you use the appliance.
- The type of appliance.
- The type and condition of the chimney.

- How the stove is operated.
- The manufacturer's recommendations.
- Relevant professional guidance.

If you use your stove regularly, speak to your chimney sweep about an appropriate sweeping schedule.

MR SWEEP TIP

Don't wait until the first freezing evening of winter to discover that your chimney needs attention.

Book your sweep before you need the stove.

16. WARNING SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Don't ignore changes in the way your stove or chimney behaves.

Seek professional advice if you notice:

- Smoke entering the room.
- Difficulty getting the fire to draw.
- Excessive smoke from the chimney.
- Strong or unusual smells.
- Excessive soot.
- Heavy deposits.
- Debris falling down the chimney.
- Birds or nesting material.
- Water entering the chimney.
- Cracked stove glass.
- Damaged door seals.
- Damaged firebricks.
- Unusual noises.
- A sudden change in stove performance.

A change is a warning

If your stove has always behaved one way and suddenly behaves differently, don't simply assume it's normal.

Something may have changed.

17. CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that can be produced when fuels don't burn correctly.

One of the problems with carbon monoxide is that it is **colourless and odourless**.

You cannot rely on your senses to detect it.

A suitable carbon monoxide alarm is therefore an important safety measure in a home with a solid-fuel appliance.

Check your alarm

Make sure:

- It is suitable for your installation.
- It is correctly positioned.
- It is within its recommended service life.

- It is tested regularly.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

If your alarm sounds

Never ignore it.

Follow the alarm manufacturer's emergency instructions, get everyone to a safe place and seek appropriate professional assistance.

18. LOOKING AFTER YOUR STOVE

Your stove should be checked regularly when it is completely cold.

Check the glass

Look for:

- Cracks.
- Damage.
- Excessive staining.
- Anything unusual.

Never use a stove with seriously damaged glass.

Check the door seal

The rope seal should be checked for excessive wear or damage.

Check the firebricks

Look for significant cracking, damage or deterioration.

Check the stove body

Look for unusual:

- Corrosion.
- Cracking.
- Damage.
- Discolouration.

Check the door

Make sure it closes correctly.

If you identify a problem, don't simply continue using the appliance and hope it disappears.

Get appropriate advice.

19. NEVER BLOCK VENTILATION

Solid-fuel appliances can have ventilation requirements depending on the appliance and installation.

Don't block or remove ventilation openings simply because they create a draught.

Ventilation may be an important part of ensuring the appliance receives the air it needs.

If you're concerned about draughts or ventilation, get professional advice rather than simply blocking an air vent.

20. IF YOU'VE JUST MOVED HOUSE

If you've recently purchased or moved into a property with a stove, take some time to establish its history.

Don't assume that because the previous owner used it, everything is automatically ready for you.

Try to establish:

- What stove is installed?

- Who installed it?

- When was it installed?

- Has the chimney been swept?

- When was it last swept?

- Has the chimney been lined?

- Is there installation documentation?

- Is the carbon monoxide alarm working?

- What fuels can the stove burn?

- Is the property in a Smoke Control Area?

If you cannot establish the history of the appliance or chimney, getting appropriate professional advice before regular use is sensible.

21. GETTING YOUR STOVE READY FOR WINTER

Before the heating season begins, carry out a few basic checks.

Chimney

- Book your chimney sweep.

- Check for obvious signs of problems.

- Establish when the chimney was last swept.

Stove

- Check the door.

- Check the glass.

- Check the door seal.

- Check the firebricks.

- Check the stove body.

- Make sure you have the manufacturer's instructions.

Fuel

- Buy suitable firewood.

- Check moisture content.

- Store logs correctly.

- Remove unsuitable timber and waste.

Safety

- Test your carbon monoxide alarm.

- Test your smoke alarms.

- Keep combustible materials away from the appliance.

Regulations

- Check Smoke Control Area requirements.

- Check your appliance is appropriate.

- Check your fuel is permitted.

22. YOUR LOG BURNER SAFETY CHECKLIST

BEFORE LIGHTING

Stove is in good condition.
Glass is undamaged.
Door seal is intact.
Door closes correctly.
Suitable dry fuel is available.
Carbon monoxide alarm is working.
Smoke alarms are working.
Chimney is swept at the appropriate interval.

WHILE BURNING

Use suitable fuel only.
Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
Allow the fire to burn properly.
Don't deliberately starve the fire of air.
Don't overload the stove.
Keep combustible items safely away.
Never burn household waste.

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Have the chimney swept at an appropriate interval.
Check stove components.
Check door seals.
Check glass.
Check firebricks.
Store firewood correctly.
Keep carbon monoxide alarms operational.
Know the Smoke Control Area rules applying to your property.
Investigate unusual changes in stove performance.

23. THE MR SWEEP GOLDEN RULES

If you remember nothing else from this guide, remember these nine simple rules.

1. BURN DRY WOOD

Properly dried firewood burns more effectively than wet wood.

2. BURN THE RIGHT FUEL

Follow your appliance manufacturer's instructions.

3. NEVER BURN HOUSEHOLD WASTE

Your stove isn't an incinerator.

4. DON'T STARVE YOUR FIRE

Operate the appliance as it was designed to operate.

5. DON'T OVERLOAD YOUR STOVE

More logs don't necessarily mean more heat.

6. KEEP YOUR CHIMNEY SWEEP

Regular sweeping is an important part of responsible stove ownership.

7. CHECK YOUR CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM

Test it regularly and replace it when necessary.

8. KNOW YOUR LOCAL RULES

Smoke Control Area requirements can vary from one part of Staffordshire to another.

9. DON'T IGNORE PROBLEMS

If something changes, get it checked.

A FINAL WORD FROM MR SWEEP

A wood-burning stove should be something you enjoy — not something you worry about. Used correctly, maintained properly and supplied with appropriate fuel, your stove can be a wonderful feature of your home.

The key is responsible ownership.

Burn the right fuel.

Operate your stove correctly.

Keep your chimney maintained.

Check your safety equipment.

Don't ignore warning signs.

And if you're unsure, **ask a professional rather than guess.**

MR SWEEP CHIMNEYS & STOVES

PROFESSIONAL CHIMNEY SWEEPING

Staffordshire & surrounding areas

Whether your chimney needs its regular sweep, you're concerned about an existing stove or you're thinking about installing a new appliance, **Mr Sweep Chimneys & Stoves** is here to help.

CLEAN CHIMNEY

SAFE STOVE

PEACE OF MIND

BOOK YOUR CHIMNEY SWEEP

07380 805 327

Mr Sweep Chimneys & Stoves

Serving Staffordshire & surrounding areas

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This guide has been produced for general homeowner information and is not intended to replace professional advice, appliance manufacturer's instructions, Building Regulations, government guidance or local-authority requirements.

Smoke Control Area requirements vary according to location. Always check the current requirements applying to your individual property.

Fuel requirements can also vary depending on the appliance and location.

If you are unsure whether your appliance, chimney or fuel is suitable, seek advice from an appropriately qualified professional.

Mr Sweep Chimneys & Stoves accepts no responsibility for decisions made solely on the basis of this general guide.

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