

**Dear Friend,**

Each month, BOWA Home Advisor provides you with important tips on how to improve and protect your home's value. We hope the following is helpful.



## Is your Chimney in Tip-Top Shape?

Whether you have a wood-burning or gas fireplace, regular maintenance of your chimney is essential to ensure its safe operation and long-term structural integrity. As your chimney exhausts fumes from your furnace and water heater, as well as from your fireplace, it is recommended that you have your chimney inspected annually regardless of the number of fires you burn each month.

Poorly maintained chimneys may result in serious problems, such as carbon monoxide poisoning, chimney fires and premature failure of the structure itself. The good news is, these issues are often avoided with regular chimney maintenance.

A proper inspection by a trained professional should include careful evaluation of your chimney's:

**Caps and Mesh:** The hood-like metal caps over the flue openings prevent rain and snow from falling into the flues, and protect the chimney from downdrafts that can force smoke and fumes back into the house. Wire mesh prevents small animals from nesting in the chimney and also prevents burning ashes from reaching the roof or other nearby combustible materials. The caps and mesh should be cleaned from time to time and replaced as needed.

**Crown:** Particularly vulnerable to water, the crown is the mound of cement that surrounds the flue openings and sheds water toward the edges of the chimney. Failure to maintain or replace a cracked crown may allow water to get down into the bricks and mortar of the chimney and can cause severe problems over time - often necessitating the costly rebuilding of the entire chimney.

**Flashing:** Flashing is the sheet metal used to reinforce and weatherproof the joints and angles of a roof, such as around the chimney. Timely repairs to your flashing can prevent roof leaks, masonry corrosion and other costly structural damage.

**Bricks and Masonry:** Water damage to masonry chimneys is usually a slow, subtle process. As water can seep in, freeze and cause cracks or eat away and weaken components, bricks and masonry should be inspected regularly for cracks and crumbles. Damaged masonry should be repaired or replaced to minimize costly, structural repairs. Many experts recommend treating the entire chimney with a sealant to help it defend itself against water penetration.

**Chimney Liners:** If your chimney has a flue liner, it should be inspected for cracks, crumbles or other damage. An undamaged liner adds a layer of protection from high-temperature fires, reduces the risk of leaking fumes and helps to reinforce the chimney structurally.

**Damper:** A damper that doesn't close completely when the fireplace is not in use can be a big energy waster. On the other hand, if the damper doesn't open all the way you risk having smoke and fumes back up into your home.

**Air Intake Duct:** Some chimneys have an air intake duct from the outside of the home to the hearth to provide oxygen to the fire without creating drafts through the house. The grills on either end of the duct should be removed and the duct cleaned out.

**Exhaust Flues:** Whenever you have your chimney cleaned, have the flues that exhaust your furnace and water heater cleaned as well. While these flues usually contain little creosote, the primary problem is accumulated sulfur and chlorine deposits that can form strong acids that corrode the flue.

Finally, the chimney inspector should look for overhanging branches and vines. Overhanging branches should be cut back 10 feet from the chimney opening, to prevent them from catching fire and to prevent any obstruction to the flow of smoke.

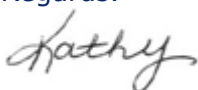
Relatively inexpensive, professional chimney inspections are a wise investment – particularly when you weigh the benefits to your home and family. With simple, regular maintenance you're sure to have years of safe enjoyment.

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If you would like more information on any of these topics or if there are other ways we can be of service, please contact [BOWA Builders](#).

Regards.



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