SAFETY AND WOODBURNING STOVES
Information taken from University of Wisconsin Extension Pamphlet #62936
"Safety and Wood Heating Systems"

As more families are installing woodburning systems for energy conservation, the danger of house and chimney fires increase. Even if you install your woodburner properly and operate it carefully, the system is more dangerous than any other heating system.

Each year, many costly and tragic fires occur, lives and property are lost because the safety of heating homes with wood was overlooked. This doesn't have to happen. You simply need to use common sense and take these precautions.

* The chimney must be properly constructed, in good repair, and kept clean of tars and creosote.
* The heating unit must be well designed and constructed so burning coals, sparks and smoke cannot escape.
* The unit must be set on an inflammable base large enough so coals or sparks cannot spill on a flammable floor surface.
* Flammable walls or ceilings must be protected by adequate distance from the stove or pipes or by a heat shield.
* No wood, clothing or other flammable materials should be placed were the heat from the unit could ignite them.
* No oils, gases or volatile liquids should be placed or stored where fumes can be ignited by open flame.
* Provide adequate ventilation as oxygen consumed by combustion can be replaced.
* Do not fully load a heating unit, set the draft and immediately leave, as the fuel may flare up and overheat.
* Don't use volatile liquids for starting a fire.
* Be careful when removing ashes; live coals are often present which might fall or otherwise contact flammable materials.
* Install a good smoke alarm and have a proper fire extinguisher readily available.

BE PREPARED FOR A FIRE

No wood burning system is 100% safe and fireproof. A safe installation and extra care help prevent fire, but accept the idea that there could be a fire, and be prepared to handle it.

Make certain everyone in the house is familiar with the warning signs of a chimney fire - sucking sounds, a loud roar, and shaking pipes. Instruct everyone on what to do in case of fire. Practice fire drills and instruct all adults on how and when to use a fire extinguisher.

Put the fire department phone number in an obvious place near the phone.

If you think you have a chimney fire:
* Call the fire department immediately - before doing anything else.
* Cut off the fire's air supply by closing the air intake vents to the firebox.
* Close the stove damper.
* Get everyone out of the house, and put them to work watching for sparks or signs of fire on the roof or nearby. One adult should stay in the house to check the attic and upper floors for signs of fire.
* Keep a class ABC dry chemical fire extinguisher handy. Discharge it into the stove if there is a danger of the house or surroundings catching on fire.

Be sure young children understand the danger of being seriously burned from the radiating heat if they get too close to the fire box or accidentally touch the hot metal. As an extra precaution a protective blockage should be put around the stove to discourage toddlers from getting too close during their play and exploring time.

Young children should not be left unattended in the room where a wood-burning stove is in use.