CUTTING FIREWOOD WITH A CHAIN SAW

Paul Bunyan used an ax and an ox. But you'll probably use a chain saw if you plan to cut wood for a fireplace or wood-burning stove this fall, according the David Robson, Extension Educator, Horticulture, with the Springfield Extension Center.

The nature of the work requires that a chain saw be an extremely aggressive machine. But, like any other equipment, the chain saw will be more efficient and safer to use if maintained in top operating condition.

Last year, these saws -- combined with human carelessness-- were responsible for some 23,000 accidents.

Contact with the chain is the primary cause of serious chain saw injuries. Sometimes victims touch the still moving chain after releasing the trigger. Or, the chain on the top of the bar jams or binds in the wood and throws or kicks the saw back towards the operator. A saw malfunction, such as broken chain, also can cause injuries.

The first step toward good saw maintenance is thoroughly reading the operator's manual. Ask the dealer for detailed advance on specific maintenance procedure.

A sharp properly tensioned chain is a pleasure to use. Cutting action is fast and smooth and effort required on the operator's part is minimal. But, he warns that forcing a chain saw into the wood can severely damage the chain and increase the chance of an accident.

Use recommended filing guides to sharpen the chain's cutting teeth. Check the manufacturer's specifications for the

particular chain you use and for recommendations pertaining to different uses.

Correct chain tension is very important to insure good cutting action and long chain life. The chain should be snug against the guide bar, but free enough to be drawn along the bar with one hand when the motor is turned off. Always let the chain stop rotating and cool before adjusting the tension. Never adjust the bar or chain while the motor is running.

Proper lubrication also will prolong the chain life. Soak the chain in a pan of oil between jobs. Pump the oiler frequently while cutting. Periodically stop the engine, then pump the oiler while pulling the saw chain around by the hand. You can dilute oil with kerosene to ensure cold weather lubrication, but use twice as much oil when cutting with this mixture.

Proper tension and lubrication are crucial when using a new chain. Never break in a saw chain under heavy cutting loads. improper break-in procedures can quickly ruin a new chain.

Also, use the following chain-saw care tips, adds Robson.

-Always use a chain guard when transporting a saw. The guard will protect you and your machine.
-Adjust the carburetor so the chain does not move when the motor is idling.
-Turn the bar over after each full day of use to equalize wear on bar rails.
-Keep the entire unit well oiled and cleaned. In particular, clean the bar groove, fins, air filer, muffler and hand grips.
-Inspect the saw regularly. Replace damaged or worn parts.

STORING FIREWOOD OUTSIDE HELPS PREVENT INSECT PROBLEMS

A variety of insects live in the dead and dying trees that we use for firewood. To avoid problems in the house with these insects, store firewood outside, according to David Robson, Extension Educator, Horticulture, with the Springfield Extension Center.

Dying trees attract a variety of insects, primarily wood-borers, that lay their eggs on the tree. The resulting borer larvae burrow throughout the wood, allowing other organisms to enter the tree and eventually break it down into nutrients that living plants use.

Since firewood is dead wood, these same borers are common in it. Their eating of the wood does not appreciably reduce the amount of burnable wood over the few months that we store it. When we bring the firewood indoors, the adult borers in the wood warm and up and become active, leave the firewood and fly around the house.

Probably the most common borer associated with firewood is the red-headed ash borer. The adult beetle is about 5/8 inch long, reddish-brown, long-legged and has 4 yellowish bands across the back. Since it feeds on wood with a fairly high moisture content, it will not attack the dried wood used in house construction.

Worker carpenter ants are large (at least 1/4 inch long), black, and wingless. Carpenter ants do not eat wood, but hollow it out for their nests. Pieces of firewood containing nests that

are stored indoors provide a base of operations from which the workers forage for crumbs of food all over the house.

Woodroaches have long legs and antennae, are dark brown, and are about one inch long when fully grown. Although these cockroaches are common in wooded areas, they seldom enter the house. If brought in on firewood, they will eventually die, but can be a nuisance around drains and basements in their search for water, says Robson.

To guard against these and other less common insects being a household problem, do not store your firewood in the basement or any other part of the house. When using your fireplace, do not bring firewood into the house that you will not be putting on the fire within half an hour.

If you wish to leave a stack of firewood next to the fireplace as part of the decor, heat each piece of wood in the oven at 150 degrees F. for 20 minutes to kill any insects present. Firewood should not be sprayed with an insecticide since dangerous fumes may be emitted when the wood is burned.

-30-

Pull date - April 1, 1994 Efficient Fire-wood Harvesting

by Richard R. Doucet

WANT a good supply of quality firewood with low cash expenditure? Want more time to get other homestead chores done? Want some good exercise, but not endless hours of backbreaking work? Care about the area you're going to harvest and don't want to scar it up with heavy equipment?

You can accomplish all of these aims in one stroke - if you

know the "magic word". That word? Efficiency!

A firewood harvesting foray can yield a far greater amount of product than would normally be expected in the same amount of time when you use efficient planning, preparation and execution.

There is really no problem in locating stands or areas of poten tial firewood. They are usually too small to warrant commercial attention or too difficult to reach without heavy equipment. Perfect for you to obtain, for no cash cost and perhaps only an exchange of "logging rights", a small share of the wood. For this reason I wont go into where to find wood.

I have a 15-acre homestead abutting a 47-acre lot. My neighbor, who has just built a log home on the front of that lot, allowed beavers to set up housekeeping about 3 years ago. The pond they created effectively cut access to the back 80 percent of the lot, making it impossible for her to cut firewood without crossing my property, and even then only with a great deal of difficulty because of the terrain.

The beavers, on the other hand, had no trouble reaching and cutting trees at all. Given the taste beavers have for the better quality trees, it was not long before an amazing abundance of large oaks, birches, poplar and beech trees lay in disarray in the area. Even more trees stood, dead, from having been girdled by the beavers or drowned by the rising water.

We both wanted the estimated 10 to 12 cord of wood that could be extracted from the area, but we also know the devastation loggers would cause if we had them do it. And, of course, it would not be cheap. Therefore, we settled on a simple exchange of part of the harvest for her if I could get it out.

With the aforementioned in mind, I hasten to add that this article is not a review of proper safety procedures for wood cutting. Anyone planning to do any work with a chain saw, power splitter or any hand tool such as an axe or buck saw should be completely knowledgeable in the safe use and operation of these tools. Extensive instruction and safety tips are included with any power or hand tool you purchase. I can give you no better advice than to tell you to study and understand the instructions for any equipment you intend to use.

However, I will make these few points. By our very nature those of us who seek the more self-sufficient way of life, often tend to work alone. Sometimes because we want to and other times because we have to. While it is never a good idea to work in the woods alone, especially with power tools, if you decide to, then I strongly suggest you do the following:

- If there is any chance of having someone around for a period of time get as much power tool work done as possible, especially chain saw work.

- Have a first aid kit with you. Even a simple one with com press bandages can save your life.

- Have a CB radio, whistle or "fog horn" (the kind carried on small boats and powered by a can of compressed air) as a means of signaling for help.

- Last, but not least, THINK SAFETY AT ALL TIMES.

Frugal is a word we do not hear much these days, but its meaning is not lost on homesteaders. Keep it in mind as you choose your tools for the task. When it come to large items, such as a chain saw, borrow it if you do not need it for more than this one task.

You can easily be sold a lot of expensive doodads and "need-to-have" stuff that you can really do without. Some of it can be very expensive, such as a wood splitter; nice to look at and does a fast job, but considerable money to spend for two or three day's worth of work, only to be stored for the rest of the year.

You can do a reasonably fast and "effort acceptable" job with only these items: safety glasses, gloves, ear protection, small hatchet or machete, splitting wedge, maul, chain saw with acces sories, and a "measuring stick." you can quickly and easily make yourself a measuring stick. It will save you time and maybe some aggravation.

Cut a pole about four feet long and about an inch or so in diameter and clean it up by taking all the branches and bark off. Then decide how long your split wood has to be to fit your stove, its "stove length".

For example, my stove takes 24 inch logs so I cut my logs to 20 inches... just to make sure they fit. I marked off my stick at 20 inches and 40 inches, making sure the handle end was indicated. Use bright yellow or orange paint or tape for this. Using this stick, you can quickly measure off multiples of correct stove lengths and mark them on the logs with your hatchet.

When To Cut - Pick your season for wood cutting. In my area, southern New Hampshire, the best times of year are mid-to-late spring and mid-to-late autumn. During these times of the year the weather may still be unpredictable, but usually it's good. In the spring, the leaves and fast growing ferns and grasses have not yet sprung up to make work difficult. In the fall, especially after the first good frost, grasses and ferns have died back and many leaves are off the trees. But, best of all, there are almost no insects around!

By the time one of these two seasons rolls around, you should have already accomplished the next step - reconnaissance

Whether the areas you will "log" is on or near your property or further away, this is a step that is most important. By choosing the area in the first place, you have already decided that it is worth the time and effort to travel the distance involved to get the wood.

On your reconnaissance you should make the following notes:

- How far from your transportation do you want to walk to a logging area?

- In that area, how much "dry" wood is available (including cut and left by loggers, standing dead or hangers)?

- How much green wood is there?

Make a sketch of where and how you will set up your work site, Mark the various stations. Setting up the work site is next. You may elect to do it days before you start to cut or do it first day of cutting. The important thing to remember is that next to safety, efficiency is most important; so take the time to set up

The logging area and the work site are set up so that wood flows in one direction and is handled as few times as possible. Clear your work sits of grass, ferns, loose stones, and dead wood that is in the way. The same is true for your walkways in the work site and throughout the logging area. You will be carrying some good sized logs and the painful consequences of tripping over something will be greatly increased with the weight of a log in your arms or on your shoulder. Pay particular attention to

special dangers.

Closest to the transport should be the splitting area. When the wood is split, it can be tossed directly into the transport. This is also the best place to leave items such as fuel, tools, bar oil, lunch and refreshments. A note here: alcoholic beverages of any kind have no place when you are doing this type of work.

Next to the splitting area, set up two "bucking stands". Both stands serve the same purpose: to produce multiple stove length pieces in a single cut and thus making the most efficient use of time and energy.

Though each stand is made differently, there is one thing about their construction they have in common that is very important. The width of the stands MUST be a few inches shorter than the length of the bar on your chain saw.

If this width is greater than the bar length, the saw will "tip" on the log farthest out and cause the saw to kick back at you. Both stands are used at the same time. The pre-built one holds smaller logs or branches, and you can put as many in as the stand will hold. However, with the field-built stand relative diameters are important. Putting a much smaller log on the out side, or farthest from you, with a larger log closer is not safe, because the chain of the saw can pull the smaller one over the larger one, hitting you quite hard. Basically, use the pre-built stand for logs and branches less than 4 inches and the field-built one for over 4 inches in diameter.

On the opposite side of the splitting area, find a space for "uglies." Uglies are what I call short leftovers and pieces too hard to split, such as knots and forks. As I measure up logs for cutting, I usually cut around these and leave them behind. This

way, when it is time to split, I do not have a fight on my hands. I save the uglies to burn during the day when I can tend the fire... "Waste knot, want knot."

The last areas to set up are the stacking areas. This is noth ing more than a cleared area. As you bring your wood in, you fill the bucking stands first, then stack up the rest. Now you are ready to start. You arrive early on a nice sunny day and are ready to go. Stop! Take time to finish your coffee Now is the time to answer the most important question of the day: "How much can I really get done in the time I have set aside?" Your goal should be to get everything you cut home at the end of the time you have

Now you are ready to start cutting. Cut the trees in the fol lowing order:

- Downed trees, green and dead.
- Hangers and leaners (be careful).
- Standing dead trees.
- Standing green trees.

Work from a point closest to your work site outward to the farthest point you will want to go. Do all the like work at once. Cut down trees. Limb all the trees. Mark off all the trees in stove lengths with the help of your measuring stick. Cut all the logs to carrying length.

If you can lift 100 pounds, do not try to carry logs any heavier than about 50 pounds. Not only will you get tired faster trying to carry your best load and risk a lifting injury, but the chance of a serious injury is much greater if you fall with 100 pounds on your shoulder.

When cutting the logs, cut in multiples of the stove length marks you made. The shortest log will be one of one stove length. If this is still too heavy, you will have to split it in half. As you work up the trunk of the tree, the diameter will get smaller and you will be able to carry logs of two and then three stove lengths.

The maximum length you should carry is not more than about 8 feet. Beyond this length, they became very clumsy to handle and difficult to walk with through the woods. When you get to diame ters of about 4 inches and less there is no need to mark them. Your 2 x 4 bucking stand will do that for you.

Splitting - Once all the cutting is done, the next chore is to get them to the work site. Just as with the other work, there is a best order to work in:

- The heaviest and farthest away.
- The farthest away for like sizes.
- The uglies.

By working from the farthest point with the heaviest ones first, you achieve several goals. First, the heaviest are most likely to be the single stove lengths and these can go straight to the splitting area. They will be out of your way from the logging area first and ready to be split at the work site first. More important, you will move the heaviest the farthest when you are still rested and strongest. As the day goes on you will begin to tire, but the difficulty of the work will lessen with the de crease in your energy level... a definite psychological advan tage. Last to be brought in and loaded are the uglies. They are the smallest and represent the least valuable of the wood. If some one shows up to help, like the children after school, these small pieces will be easy for them to handle and give them some

thing useful to do. However, should time run short, you can always leave the uglies behind.

Now, all the work will be done in the work site. What you have accomplished so far should have taken about 2/3 of the time you have to complete the task.

Continuing the theory of getting the most energy consuming tasks finished first, the next step is to split the stove length logs, and load them as you split. Use the field-build stand to cut the multiple length logs and split and load them. Lastly, cut the smallest diameter logs in the 2 x 4 stand. Each cut here will give you armloads of smaller diameter lengths that will not need splitting. Once these are loaded, just throw on the uglies.

Before you leave though, you may want to consider one of those nice, straight, tall, but very dead pines. Cut into rounds about a foot long, they split very nicely into kindling. Load your tools and any trash in the area... even if it is not yours.

You have gotten your wood home in the time you set aside. Done? Not yet! Follow through on the last task storage.

You went through a lot of trouble and work to get this wood so take care of it until you use it. There are many methods of storing wood, but keep these characteristics in mind as you plan to store:

- Try to store it out of the weather.
- Separate the green from the seasoned and the bone dry.
- Don't store it too far from the house... remember, you have to get to it in the dead of winter.

Use the bone dry early in the season. It will burn faster, but

chances are you will need it mostly for getting "the chill out" more than serious heating. Stone the green wood in ricks one stove length wide, about four feet high as long as you like. Run the ricks east and west. Wrap the sides and ends in clear or black plastic, but not the top.

Put scrap boards or plywood on top, held down by rocks or logs. On sunny, winter days the plastic will cause a greenhouse effect and help dry the wood. The moisture will be able to escape through the top. By early spring it should be ready to use.

Now you can sit back and have that cup of herbal tea or dip into that cider barrel.

You have efficiently, at little cash expense, brought yourself closer to self sufficiency using what others did not want. You have not harmed the environment in the process, and have gotten a good physical workout that others pay big money for at a spa. Not bad for a day's work! Be proud of yourself and sleep well to night.

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(Nov/Dec 1993 Backwoods Home Magazine)

Gathering low cost firewood

By John R. Horton

Fireplaces and wood stoves are more efficient with each new

decade. Heatilators, inserts, blowers, and a host of heating bells and whistles have rekindled the desirability of wood heat. Today, the key for enjoyment of that wood heat is in discovering many hot firewood resources that balance best with the checkbook.

Department of Energy figures reveal that the average cost of delivered cordwood nearly doubled in the last 10 years. By contrast, in that same period, the cost of utilities in most of the nation stabilized. The stark difference in cost between firewood and utilities combined to create the greatest decline of wood heating in history. Further statistics released this year by Califomia-based Hearth Products Association (HPA) show that while many homes have wood heat devices, less than 15% are heated by wood as the main energy source. The HPA stresses that a prime reason for the decline is the spiraling cost of firewood. The nationwide average of $125 per cord can dampen fireplace spirits.

Many folks enjoy the aesthetics of a toasty fireplace or woodstove. But given the significant disparity between the costs of firewood and utilities, more folks now figure that they benefit financially by turning up the thermostat. For those who desire wood heating in spite of the cost, firewood cost-cutting tactics exist to provide both money in the pocket and a glowing hearth.

Following are five practical ways to acquire a regular supply of quality cordwood and kindling at low or, in some cases, no cost. Many of these tips can be put into practice no farther away than your community's backyard.

Free firewood from tbe Forest Service

Forest Service firewood permits are available to state residents. For most states, the average for such permits is $10 a cord, usually with limits of between five and ten cords a year per household.

Even better, many ranger districts offer free permits, usually for two to five cords a year. The downside is that the permittee must collect, split, haul and stack the wood. The type and amount of wood, though, can be well worth the labor.

My own free wood-hauling permit allowed a harvest of two cords of downed, easily accessible, old-growth fir. Leftover logging rounds and limbs it was all superb firewood, easily splittable and would have cost as much as $150 per cord from many firewood suppliers. For the combined $45 cost of a rental chain saw and newly-purchased splitting maul, I saved as much as $250, gas included. It was a month's worth of exercise that also paid off in the fireplace.

Those two cords lasted three months. Consumed during the coldest part of winter on the Oregon coast, the savings in utilities was $ 180. That savings, plus free firewood, is household budget mathematics that equals dollars and sense.

Road clearing and utility cutting

Another free resource is the stacks of wood often left for gleaning by road commission and utilities department tree-clearing crews. Frequently required to clear highway and power-line easements, their pains can be a fireplace gain. The wood can be of any variety, so the discriminating harvester is best off biding his or her time. On the other hand, get it while the getting is good, or someone else will.

At the edge of a turnout on a major highway near my home, I recently collected a full cord of firebox-length alder, the result of efforts by a road crew. If not for an alert neighbor, my total could have been two cords. While not the best firewood, alder runs about $ 100 a cord in my area. That savings is $1OO more in my pocket.

Private tree trimmers

Private tree trimmers, like roadside cutting crews, are sometimes eager for someone to haul their cuttings away. Some even pay a fee for such service. A well-timed proposal can reap a nice haul of free fuel, depending on the situation and the tree trimmer. More than one tree trimmer also sells cordwood at reduced prices.

One tree cutter who advertises on shopping center bulletin boards is happy to hear from those in need of firewood.

"I don't make a living with firewood," says Dale Russell, of Lake Cutting Service in Seal Rock, Oregon. "But, firewood for sale earns vacation money."

Russell recommends that customers follow his lead and place ads in newspapers or on bulletin boards. He also touts the effectiveness of staking a well-placed "Firewood Needed" sign by the road, including phone number and type of wood sought.

Russell adds that he and most tree trimmers usually are not "professional" firewood haulers. Consequently, tree trimmers are often open to negotiating price. He asserts that deal-seeking customers who ask him, "Will you take less?" usually receive a five-to-ten dollar discount on full cords.

Consumer tips

While the easiest, but most expensive, method of obtaining fuel is by way of the firewood delivery person, a few easy-to-follow steps may reduce costs and potential hassles.

Consider the options: Many firewood dealers advertise on bulletin boards, as well as in the yellow pages. After copying several phone numbers, compare costs.

Reputable wood haulers recommend that new clients ask whether the amount of wood promised is an actual cord (by measurement, a cord is a tight stack of wood four feet wide by eight feet long by four feet high). Another reasonable query

concerns seasoning. Dry wood catches fire easier than unseasoned. If it's important to burn the wood now, check out how dry it is.

Estimates from the Oregon Department of Energy reveal that dry wood has a moisture range of 2O%, as compared to 60% in unseasoned wood. The difference in ranges relates directly to BTU output. Nearly one-half of total energy is consumed by wet wood in a steaming process. So obtaining seasoned wood, and keeping it dry, goes a long way toward big savings and conservation of time, effort, and a valuable resource: trees.

One veteran firewood hauler agrees that establishing wood dryness is important, and says it is easy to spot.

"I don't care what kind of wood it is," asserts wood-hauler Socorro Acevez, "the wetter it is the more pitch you'll have in your chimney. A crusty layer of pitch and soot can catch fire," he says, "so I never burn any wood that is not dry. "

According to Acevez, dry, split firewood tends to be lighter than wet wood, both in color and weight. Also, seasoned wood tends to have off-color bands, or striations. For example, Acevez says that fir is well-seasoned when he can see clusters of inch-wide, burgundy-colored bands on cross sections of split chunks. That's what he prefers to burn, and what he reserves for special customers.

Acevez recommends that customers specify in advance the kind of wood they want. With split wood often preferred over limb wood, he cautions that customers make sure beforehand what they bargain for. Length, too, is a factor. Stove wood is usually shorter than pieces burned in full-length fireplaces.

Also, Acevez says that tight-grained oak and medium-grained fir burn hot and long, compared to softer alder and spruce. Alder and spruce may be cheaper, per cord, but usually put out half the BTUs of oak and fir. He confides that a client's real money's worth lies in the species they order.

If in doubt, and the delivery person lives fairly close,

eyeball the particular stack in question. After all, you may even want to haul it yourself, possibly at a substantial savings of some 10 to 25 percent.

Whether hauling wood by oneself or having it delivered, Acevez advises that many problems can be resolved early by defining exact terms. He says that nearly all of his deals made by telephone are consummated exactly as negotiated. With some haulers, though, misunderstandings can happen.

Not long ago, I called a hauler for price comparisons on delivered firewood. Agreeing to provide a cord of old-growth fir from a commercial harvester, the delivery person quoted $80. The deal nearly failed, though, when another person called back to confirm a higher price. The delivery man telephoned not long after and cleaned up the untidy error.

One victory won, I neglected to negotiate delivery and stacking into the price. The delivery was made as scheduled, but I had to laboriously stack the wood myself. Late stacking negotiations broke down due to an early haggling oversight.

Obtaining kindling is another important factor in the wood box equation. Sometimes, small limb wood and gleanings can be had from commercial trimmers and firewood deliverers. More resources are lumber stores, lumber mills, and construction sites. Frequently, these places are happy to give their excess scrap away. Well-placed phone calls or visits can result in old pallets, scrap two-by-fours, or bundles of limb wood.

It's best to burn clean, dry wood. Firewood that is unseasoned, or dried wood stacked in a damp environment, dramatically reduces firebox efficiency, and leads to more frequent maintenance problems.

Most of these ideas can be adapted to any locale. For example, many urbanites reside less than an hour from rural harvesting possibilities, and tree trimmers and forest service offices can provide a wealth of firewood information. Operating a fireplace or woodstove can be cheap, though not easy, even if

you don't own your own woodlot.

From : Mark Sun 13 Feb 94 07:38

Subj : WOOD STOVE HEATING

WW> The soot has been a problem since the beginning of the
WW> heating season, when it was last cleaned. However, when
WW> we open the door to load wood, we do get a face full of smoke.
WW> Is this back draft? Not sure how that can be prevented.

Hello William. This sounds like back draft all right. Did you do the cleaning of your chimney or did you hire someone? It sounds as if you have a partial blockage. Does your chimney have a damper assembly in it? If so, be sure to open it a moment before loading wood.

The fact that you are getting smoke at all is a bad sign. Our wood stove produces hardly any smoke at all, except when it is being lit or if it is burning poorly. Usually the discharge from our stack is just a clear hot shimmering in the air. Check to see that air can get into your combustion chamber easily too, as it sounds as if you are not getting a complete burn.

We heat with wood. It is great for us. (Lots of wood burning type trees here in Ontario.) To heat our house, we generally use about one and a half full cords a heating season. That works out to cost us about 225 dollars a year. For the last nine winters we have purchased two full cords of wood and in some winters, we have burned as little as a half a cord. This means we have a good stock pile of wood. To me, it is better than money in the bank. One cannot burn money to keep warm. The first winter we lived here, we started using electric heat and our bill for a three month period was 650 dollars. Now, our normal bills are about 180 for the same period so wood has been very economical for us.

MK

From : Charles Sun 13 Feb 94 10:28

WW> Harmon,
WW> The soot has been a problem since the beginning of the heating season,
WW> when it was last cleaned. However, when we open the door to load
WW> wood, we do get a face full of smoke. Is this back draft? Not sure

I suspect that major sources of your troubles are:
1. Wood that is not properly dried'
2. Operating with insufficient air for proper combustion.

Soot is a product, along with "creosote", of insufficient air at
the combustion site. Try operating with the damper open wider.
The wood will burn faster but much more completely. Keep the
fire small, but burning properly rather than large and just
smouldering, producing soot and 'Creosote'.

The face full of smoke can probably be remedied in one of 2 ways:
- open the damper for a minute before opening the door
- open the door only about 1 inch for 30 sec. then all the way.
   Gives the smoke a chance to clear out up the chimney before
you open the door all the way.

Good Luck, =>CGH<=

From : Arthur
Subj : WOOD STOVE HEATING

-=> Quoting William White to Harmon Seaver <=-

WW> Harmon,
WW> The soot has been a problem since the beginning of the heating season,
WW> when it was last cleaned. However, when we open the door to load
WW> wood, we do get a face full of smoke. Is this back draft? Not sure
WW> how that can be prevented.

Yup, sounds like a back draft to me... Before loading wood, you should make sure that all your dampers are open, and any bypass directors (such as for a catalytic combustor) are set to maximize flow up the chimney...

I would double check the chimney cleaning job to make sure that your chimney isn't obstructed somehow. I would also check on the airflow to the stove, it may not be getting enough air volume to give a good draft, especially if you have done a really good job of sealing the rest of the house.... You may need to figure out some way of introducing some outside combustion air...

Also take a look at the height of your chimney, make sure that it is tall enough to clear any nearby parts of the roof, trees, adjacent buildings, hills, etc... There are formulas for this, but if you aren't sure, try just adding a few feet of stovepipe and see if that helps....

WW> Frankly considering another heating source to install when $ is
WW> available. Solar perhaps. Appreciate hearing about your experiences
WW> with wood heating.

My folks have a Vermont Castings wood stove in their cottage, which replaced the rusted out "heatilator" fireplace they used to use... It almost does TO good of a job, and keeps the place nice and warm, with minimal wood consumption. Even if you go with an alternative source, I would reccomend keeping the wood stove around as a possible backup source....

ART

From : William

Interesting to hear your experiences with wood heating. If it weren't for the soot, we would love heating with wood. Our home's previous owner showed me how to clean the chimney, which he constructed. You're right, I need a professional to take a look at it. Thanks from North Carolina!

Bill

From: zumbachl

I'm going to be building an 1800 sq. ft. house this spring in some timber. I would like some advice from people experienced with energy efficient fireplaces.

This is what I'm looking for:
- Nice to watch
- Energy Efficient
- Cost of Fireplace alone (excluding pipe & decoration) <= $1700.

I've looked at two models:

The Security Chimney's BIS II
and
The Heatilator NX

The Heatilator NX seems to be a nice energy efficient model. The store claims 75%.

The BIS II brochure quotes a Department of Environmental Quality energy efficiency rating of 66.7%. It also claims some nice

features the Heatilator doesn't:
- an ash drawer for easy ash removal
- a 10 hour overnight burn capability
- an air intake lever to adjust heating from 11,300 to 41,500 BTU/hr.
- controlled air circluation to keep glass doors clean
- room for 20 inch logs
- 25 year warrenty vs. the Heatilator 5 year warrenty

The strange thing is that the BIS II is about $70 dollars cheaper (excluding chimney pipe). However, the chimney pipe that the BIS II dealer sells with the BIS II is doubled walled and insulated costing about twices as much as what the Heatilator dealer quotes for the pipe for the NX.

Any experience with these or other models?
How much should should the chimney pipe cost?
Are the fan options for these fireplaced needed?
Will a ceiling fan suffice?
Can these things pay for themselves with moderate use?

Thanks in advance for any information.

Lyle