

Solid Rock Masonry, Inc.

THE PROPER CARE AND FEEDING OF YOUR MASONRY HEATER

IMPORTANT SAFETY POINTS* - Please read carefully before using your masonry heater.

- 1) USE YOUR HEATER ONLY WITH DOOR CLOSED.**
- 2) DO NOT USE A GRATE OR ANDIRONS.**
- 3) IN NEW MASONRY HEATERS THE ENTIRE CHIMNEY INSTALLATION SHOULD BE INSPECTED REGULARLY (ON A MONTHLY BASIS) UNTIL A CLEANING CYCLE IS DETERMINED.**
- 4) WHEN CLEANING A CLASS 'A' METAL CHIMNEY USE A POLY OR NYLON TYPE BRUSH. DO NOT USE A METAL BRUSH.**
- 5) FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS MUST NOT BE USED TO START FIRES.**
- 6) WHEN CLEANING THE ASHES OUT OF YOUR MASONRY HEATER, BE SURE AND USE A METAL CONTAINER FOR ASHES AS AN ADDED SAFETY MEASURE. DO NOT STORE ASHES ON COMBUSTIBLE SURFACE.**
- 7) MAINTENANCE AND SAFE OPERATIONS ARE THE HOMEOWNERS RESPONSIBILITY.**
- 8) INSTALL SMOKE ALARMS AND CO. DETECTORS FOR ADDED PROTECTION.**

WARNING:

- 1) Before starting the fire, check damper for proper position.**
- 2) On masonry heaters where there is no damper, but an airtight fire door to stop air flow, do not close this type of door until the wood is totally burned and only glowing embers remain. No flames should be visible.**
- 3) Once the airtight (damper) door is closed it should remain closed until the next firing at least 6 hours later (minimum). If this procedure is not followed, a gas explosion can occur, resulting in expensive rebuilding of the heater and possible personal injury.**
- 4) Some masonry heaters have this type of damper/door. If your masonry heater has a combustion air control, never close before fuel is totally consumed.**

* - Adopted from the MHA Home Owner's Safety Manual and Burning Guide for Masonry Heaters

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1) INITIAL FIRING AND BREAK-IN CONDITIONING

- Wait at least 30 days to start using your new masonry heater, unless your installer specifies otherwise. This allows the heater to fully cure and dry out before being subjected to high thermal loads.
- NOTE: You may be able to help the drying out process by using an electric fan or heater directed into the firebox starting 2 or 3 days after the masonry heater is installed. Leave the damper open fully during dry out and curing/break in period.
- You should have 8 to 10 **small** fires to cure and slowly dry out any moisture present. (NOTE: This precaution should also be taken annually at the start of every heating season).

WARNING: DO NOT EXCEED 10 PERCENT OF FULL FIRING LOAD (as specified by manufacturer) ON THE FIRST 8 TO 10 FIRES.

- Then increase the heating load by 5 percent on each of the next 8 fires.
- On the next fires, increase each by 10 percent until you reach the 100 percent maximum that the masonry heater was designed for.
- If during this break-in period you notice moisture (damp areas on surface or sweat appearing in mortar joints) skip 1 or 2 fires to avoid a steam explosion.
- You should not feel any heat on the surface during the first 12 to 15 fires. If you do, you may be over firing. Going slow initially will ensure your heater will give you many years of trouble-free performance.

2) NORMAL FIRING AND USE

- 1) No Grate - Be sure not to use a grate inside the firebox. Fires should be built right on the firebrick floor. Also it is important to ensure the firebox floor is clear of ashes before starting a new fire.
- 2) Close Door - The door should always be closed during operation, and flammable liquids should never be used to start fires.
- 3) Only Dry Hardwood (15-20% moisture content) - Homeowners should not burn anything other than well-seasoned (15-20%) dry cord wood in the heater. A

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good rule of thumb is that all wood used should be dried and seasoned at least a full year before using.

4) Top-Down Fires - Building a top-down burn fire will provide a clean burn start up with less CO and smoke. This is the recommended method of building your fires.

- The top-down burn is the opposite of what you learned as a Scout.
- Place a couple of large logs on the bottom with at least a finger's width of airspace between them, then add smaller logs on top in the opposite direction, then kindling.
- Try Fatwood or dry pine as a fire-starter.
- The fire will burn down slowly- like a candle. This method warms the flue slowly, and establishes a draft before the fire really gets going.

Here is an example of how to properly set up a top-down fire:



5) Use Hot Fires - One to two very hot fires should be burned each day, or once every 12 hours for most heaters. The fire should not be “damped down” to

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maintain a longer burning time as is the normal procedure with a wood stove. The maximum number of fires per day should be three.

6) Prevent Creosote Buildup - If the masonry heater is operated properly there should be little, if any creosote build-up in the flue, and you should find only small amounts of soot. If there is any amount of creosote in the flue proper operation and burning procedures should be reviewed.

NOTE: For chimneys with exterior exposure, the flue will be colder than an interior chimney and will accumulate more soot.

3) REGULAR CARE AND MAINTENANCE

- **IMPORTANT:** Masonry heaters require regular maintenance in order to function properly and the flue should be swept to avoid chimney fires.
- The periodic maintenance needs of your heater include:
 - Periodic inspection of the chimney and heater (every ??? weeks/months)
 - The chimney interior and exterior needs to be periodically inspected, and the heater itself should be inspected for any deterioration or loose firebrick in the firebox, any cracking in the exterior heater skin or finish work, and correct clearances to combustibles. Any issues found in these areas must be corrected immediately before continuing to use the heater.
 - Brushing out the flue gas channels (every ??? weeks/months/seasons)
 - Cleaning the flue gas channels involves using a small poly brush and vacuum. Go to the small channel doors, open them and clean and vacuum each one to remove fly ash.
 - Sweeping of the chimney flue (every ??? weeks/months/seasons) *
 - Performing any other necessary repairs (as needed)
- * NOTE: A professional chimney sweep is best qualified to sweep and maintain a masonry heater, and can likely do any minor masonry repairs needed as well.