



The Jeffery's 'top ten' guide to solid fuel appliance safety

We all expect our home appliances to work 'on demand' and solid fuel appliances are no exception, providing us with heat, hot water and cooking facilities when we need them. They will, like most items, work most efficiently and reliably plus, above all, be at their safest when correctly installed, using the optimum fuel and serviced regularly.

Jeffery's 'top ten' solid fuel appliance safety steps should provide you with a quick and handy guide:

1. Installation and servicing

You should always try to use recognised and established heating engineers/competent companies to install and service your solid fuel appliances. HETAS (www.hetas.co.uk) provides a list of registered businesses by area.

2. Choosing the right fuel

In order to get maximum value it is important to select the optimum fuel type and size for your appliance and buy the best quality you can, preferably from an Approved Coal Merchant. They are fully trained in their products, committed to the customer and abide by the Coal Trade Code.

3. Keeping an adequate air flow

All heating appliances need to have an ongoing and sufficient air flow to enable them to burn correctly. With many houses being double-glazed and/or draught-proofed, vents or airbricks may be necessary to prevent noxious fumes entering the room. Heating engineers can check the ventilation.

4. Flue cleaning

Solid fuel appliances have flues to allow gases to pass through to the chimney. These need to be kept free of soot, ash or other build up by sweeping them clean at least once a month. If your room heater has a throat plate in the top, it should be removed and cleaned monthly. Always do this when the fire is out and the surrounding area cool.

5. Having your chimney swept

Whatever type of solid fuel you use, you will need to have your chimney swept at least annually, preferably before winter sets in. You should try to use a chimney sweep who is a member of a recognised organisation e.g. The National Association of Chimney Sweeps (www.chimneyworks.co.uk) or The Guild of Master Sweeps (www.guild-of-master-sweeps.co.uk). Sweep searches are available on their websites.

6. Removing ash from the fire

In order to maximise the 'burn' capability of your solid fuel appliance and keep it in prime condition, it is recommended that you empty and check the ash pan every day/each time you use it together with de-ashing the fire bed. Fresh fuel can then be added. Accessories are available to help you e.g. ash carriers – your appliance supplier will be able to assist.

7. Using fireguards

A securely fitted fireguard should always be in place when children under 12 are in the room – this is a legal requirement. It is advisable to select one (available from appliance and fuel suppliers) which is manufactured to British Standards.

8. Carbon Monoxide poisoning prevention

If your chimney is blocked or the ventilation into the room insufficient, gas (carbon monoxide) may escape from the appliance. Inhalation of carbon monoxide gas can be fatal. It is therefore important to follow the guidelines above, consider fitting a carbon monoxide alarm and ensure you service your appliances regularly.

9. Fuel sundry selection

Just as it is important to select the best quality solid fuel for your appliance, it is also cost-effective and more efficient to buy sundries e.g. kindling wood, logs from a reliable source. Dry seasoned wood is recommended for optimum use.

10. If you should smell fumes...

You should switch off the appliance, open your doors and windows, leave the room as soon as you can and contact your heating engineer to carry out checks.

For more details, advice and products, please visit www.jefferys-online.co.uk, call 0800 454 970 or visit our store at Station Yard, St John's Lane, Bovey Tracey. TQ13 9AL.