



Outdoor Wood Boiler Safety Tips

As liquid petroleum and natural gas prices increase, there's been a corresponding rise in the use of outdoor wood-fired boilers as an economical alternative for heating homes, garages and other outbuildings.

An outdoor wood boiler looks like a small shed with a chimney on top and sits outside. Water is heated in the boiler chamber, then pumped underground to the heat exchanger of the heating system in the house or garage, etc. Although this seems like an excellent way to safely heat with wood because the unit is located away from the house, many people overlook important safety issues.

Because many manufacturers don't provide specific installation instructions, some units are installed in locations and ways that can result in an accident or fire. For example, a grass fire started by the unit can spread to other structures, or the chamber in a pressurized unit can explode if a pressure relief valve is defective. A water line can also freeze if an antifreeze solution is not added to the system.

Here are some guidelines for installing and using outdoor wood boilers safely.

- » The unit must be labeled by a testing laboratory.
- » If it is a pressurized system, it must have a working pressure relief valve.
- » The unit must be at least 25 feet from any insured dwelling or building.
- » The unit should sit on a full concrete slab with the slab extending at least 4 feet in front of the unit to enable the area to be kept clean of ashes and wood chips.
- » Firewood must be stored at least 10 feet from the unit and the area between kept clean.
- » If the unit is inside a building, the firewood should be kept in a separate area or behind a partition to keep wood debris from the front of the unit. The building should not be used for general storage of other items (gas cans, oil, etc.).
- » In colder climates, the unit must have antifreeze added to the system to prevent the freezing of the underground lines.
- » The unit must be installed by a qualified heating professional (no self installation).

For more information about American Family's Loss Control Services, visit www.amfam.com

DISCLAIMER

The recommendations printed here follow generally accepted safety standards. Compliance with these recommendations does not guarantee that you will be in conformance with any building code, or federal, state or local regulations regarding safety or fire. Compliance does not ensure the absolute safety of you, your home or place of business.