



'Thatch Fire Safety Advice'

Statistically, homes with thatched roofs are no more likely to catch fire than those with conventional roofs if the owner is made aware and understands the risk of thatch fire. However, if a thatched roof does ignite and is not caught in time, it is almost impossible to control and the results can be devastating.

This advice and information is offered as general guidance. Before considering a plan for any changes, you should firstly speak to your insurance company and gain a full understand of their policy terms and requirements.

Common Causes of Thatch Fires









Although thatch fires can be attributed to many causes, it is proven that the two main causes of thatch fires are:

-  ***Ejected embers & sparks from the chimney***
-  ***Chimney fires***

Many thatch fires have been attributed to woodburners, flue malfunction, insufficient chimney height and poorly maintained chimneys.



Minimising the risk of ejected embers

-  Chimneys should be professionally swept at least once a year, more often if the fire is regularly used.
-  An annual camera survey of the flue/chimney should be considered.
-  Ensure the woodburner is suitably lined and suitable for the room size. Strictly follow the manufacturer's instructions.
-  Never use flammable liquids, paper or cardboard to light the woodburner/fire.
-  Stay with the woodburner/fire when lighting and refuelling.
-  Always burn well-seasoned or kiln dried wood with a moisture content of no more than 20%.
-  Do not install a spark arrestor. If one is already in place, ensure it is regularly cleaned.
-  Install a bird guard but ensure it does not hinder the operation and sweeping of the flue/chimney.

Alarms & Detectors

It is recommended that smoke detectors are fitted throughout the property on each floor level including the loft space. These should ideally be mains powered with a battery back-up and interlinked so all alarms will sound.



A stove pipe thermometer is an inexpensive and very useful accessory which will allow you to quickly see how your stove is performing.



Chimney Monitor Systems act as an early warning device to inform the home owner of potential high temperatures.

Carbon monoxide alarms to detect poisonous gases that can be present in the fumes from the combustion of fuel's which aren't burnt under the correct conditions.



*Carbon
Monoxide
Alarm*

Chimneys

Ensure chimneys are regularly swept by an experienced and qualified chimney sweep.

The recommended height from the thatch to the top of the chimney pot is 1.8m.

Many chimney engineers and other specialist companies can offer a CCTV survey, this is recommended to check the internal condition of the flue.

Contact an appropriate professional body so a registered chimney engineer can review the liner to ensure it is fit for purpose for the type of appliance or fire in use.



A spark arrestor can become blocked with tar deposits. The general consensus is that if you don't have a spark arrestor, don't fit one.

Please note, any changes to the chimney, liner or appliance may require the necessary approvals.

Woodburners & Open Fires

If you are considering installing a woodburner, contact HETAS who will advise on the most suitable appliance and liner for the property.

A HETAS registered engineer will be able to advise on the most suitable liner.

Always use dry seasoned wood. The sap in unseasoned wood is the main cause of tar deposits within a chimney or liner.

Moisture meters are available to check if seasoned wood is suitable for use.



General Precautions

Place suitable fire extinguishers throughout the property with a fire blanket in the kitchen.

Do not have bonfires and discuss this with neighbours to ensure they understand the risks they pose to your thatched roof. The same applies to the use of fireworks and Chinese lanterns.

Good access to all roof voids is advisable for fire-fighting purposes. A loft hatch with a minimum size of 600mm x 900mm is recommended.

Identify the location of local fire hydrants and make a note of other water sources in the area such as ponds, swimming pools or streams.

An outside tap with a hose long enough to reach around the house including the roof should be readily available.

Contractors must not carry out any 'hot works' in the property that could create sparks or heat near the thatch, for example plumbing in roof voids or paint stripping etc.

Electrical Safety

Electrical circuits should be inspected in accordance with the latest regulations and/or insurance policy.

All wiring in roof voids should be enclosed in suitable trunking or conduit.

Avoid running any cables including aerial cable through or close to the thatch. Do not install recessed downlights on the ceiling directly below the thatch.

Ensure all light fittings in the loft space are enclosed in a 'bulkhead' fitting.



Fire Barriers

A range of thatch fire barriers and systems are available.

Physical fire barriers are installed directly on top of the roof timbers.

Consider the application of a fire retardant spray such as Thatchsayf.

Thatch fire barriers will not eliminate the risk of fire, but can reduce the potential damage resulting from a fire. Some fire barriers result in reduced insurance premiums.



"The UK's leading advisor in thatch fire safety"

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