Standard Operating Procedure
Level 1 Inspection
Factory-Built Chimney and Appliance

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is promulgated by the Chimney Safety Institute of America (CSIA) solely as general guidance for chimney sweep professionals. Since all operations are different and since it is not possible to foresee all potential hazards, this SOP must be tailored to fit the needs of each particular operation. CSIA does not warrant in any way whatsoever that adhering to this SOP will reveal every possible defect in an appliance, fireplace, venting system or chimney. Accordingly, CSIA makes no guarantee, nor does it assume any responsibility, for any damage, claim, or legal action that may arise in connection with a chimney sweep professional's use of this SOP.

Introduction

Before evaluating a factory-built chimney it is desirable to identify it if possible. If the label is still attached to the chimney, this should provide you with the make and model. It is always preferable to have the manufacturers' installation instructions in-hand when inspecting the chimney. Since the chimney is tested and listed, the manufacturer will define the proper installation. Determine if the chimney is listed to UL 103 or 103 HT. In many cases the HT chimney will be of a packed or insulated design.

Many of the installation requirements are the same for these chimneys. Most areas of the country will have a few dominant models. After servicing these chimneys you should be able to identify them and be aware of any unusual requirements a specific manufacturer might have. The rain cap may be helpful in identifying the make and model of chimney. Pictures of the installations will assist in identification.

Choice of Inspection Level

The Level 1 inspection should be included with every sweep job. You must determine that the system is not blocked and is capable of continued use as is. You are also in a position to determine the overall cleanliness of the venting system. This may require disconnecting the connector from the chimney, and using a light to look up the chimney and into the flue. If the chimney is dirty it will require sweeping. This level of inspection applies to all readily accessible portions of the chimney exterior and accessible portions of the appliance and chimney connection.

Video Inspection

If you plan to video scan the chimney set up the drop cloth and bring in the proper equipment. Take pictures of irregularities within the chimney and save them to include with the job sheet when submitted to the office. Be certain to identify the photos with the date and location of the job. While the video scanning is not a mandatory part of a Level 1 inspection, many companies elect to provide the service in an effort to enhance the value of the inspection and to document their service.

Look at the Appliance

If possible, have the homeowner provide you with the manufacturers' installation instructions for the appliance. This will help you to determine proper clearances from combustibles and floor protection requirements. On modern appliances, you will find a

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label attached to the appliance that contains this information. Confirm clearances are correct based on appliance requirements or local codes.

Look at the general condition of the appliance. This would include door gasketing, warped baffles, damaged glass or cracks in the appliance, rust or anything else that could create problems in the operation. Make sure any air controls operate freely. Make a note on the job sheet of damaged accessories such as burned out grates, catalytic combustors or firebrick in poor condition.

Connector
If there are accessories such as a barometric draft regulator, draft hood, stack damper or heat reclaimer, inspect it and note it on the job sheet. Make sure the connector is of the proper thickness, secure, and that it has the proper rise. Look for necessary clearances and document your findings.

Clearance reduction
If there is clearance reduction used for the connector or the appliance, confirm that it is appropriately designed and installed. Describe the materials used and the reference that justifies the reduction in clearances.

Floor protection
For wood burning appliances measure the size of the floor protection. It should extend 18 inches beyond the stove in all directions unless listed otherwise. Describe the material on the job sheet. Make a note describing if it is site built or a listed product.

The Chimney
Make sure the chimney is appropriate for the appliance. Many modern wood stoves will require a UL 103 HT type chimney. Check where the connector joins the chimney to be certain that this connection is drip proof and secure. Look for signs of water entry or any other leakage at this connection. If the chimney passes through a wall, look at the general condition of the wall pass-through device.

Sweeping
Once you have performed the initial inspection, begin the sweeping process. If the chimney is so dirty you cannot complete the inspection you will have to sweep it before you can evaluate the condition of the flue and liner. Make a note of the volume or nature of the deposits found in the chimney. Whether sweeping from the bottom or the top, listen for odd sounds that could indicate a separation in the chimney or some unusual assembly.

If there are indications that there was a chimney fire, take pictures and document your findings before sweeping the flue and recommend a Level 2 inspection at this time. If the client declines the recommendation, make a note on the job sheet. It may be useful to ask the homeowner to contact their insurance company and ask them if they prefer to have you sweep the chimney or if they would rather you leave the evidence undisturbed.

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If you choose to sweep the chimney from the top you will be expected to look at the general condition of the chimney, storm collar and flashing. If there is a wooden chase be sure to make sure check the chase top for rusting or perforation that allows water to enter. Look for additional clearance requirements or ventilation required by the chimney manufacturer as the chimney exits the top of the chase. If there is a shroud it must be listed or approved by the chimney manufacturer.

When sweeping, use brushes that will not damage the interior of the chimney. Get an accurate measurement of the interior dimensions of the chimney and make a note on your report. If there is a rain cap make sure it is the correct one as provided by the manufacturer and not obstructed or restrictive. Proper chimney termination height can also be determined as well as the height of the cap above the chase top, if one exists, as specified by the manufacturer.

Delivering Your Report to the Client

After you have completed the inspection, you should discuss your findings with the client, provide them a copy of the report, and obtain their signature on the report. Without the client signature it is difficult to prove that you informed them of the conditions observed. You should maintain the inspection report in a permanent filing system.

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