

What a Homeowner Should Know

What a Homeowner Should Know about Chimney Sweeps

The chimney service trade is not regulated, nor are chimney sweeps licensed in the states of Nebraska or Iowa. Opening a chimney service business requires a relatively small capital investment. Thus, virtually anyone -- without education, training, experience or even a working knowledge of proper tools or equipment can become a chimney sweep.

As a result, many ill-equipped, ill-prepared individuals are free to offer their "services" to homeowners. In most cases, there is very little monetary difference in hiring a CSIA or NCSA CERTIFIED technician and hiring someone who started their business yesterday, although many less-knowledgeable, less-competent sweeps will offer lower prices to gain business.

There are three things we'd like you to consider:

- In any service industry, you typically get the level of service you pay for. If the price is a lot cheaper than everyone else there might be a reason why!
- Do you really want to cut corners with your family's safety? Is their safety REALLY worth risking the use of a non-certified technician?
- Quality and peace of mind is not Expensive, it's Priceless.

Throughout Nebraska and Iowa, the homeowner's only gauge of a chimney service person's knowledge is the CSIA and NCSA Certification credentials.

If you're planning to hire a chimney sweep to provide a condition report, to clean your chimney system(s), or perform any repairs or improvements, here is a checklist of the things you should know about the person or company you are about to hire:

- Is the owner Certified?
- Does the company provide a Certified technician on EVERY job? (This is like having a journeyman on each job. You probably wouldn't want an apprentice heading up your service or repair work, would you?)
- Are the company's employees covered by Workers' Compensation Insurance as required by the state law? (This protects YOU!)

- Does the company offer an Internal Video Evaluation and Documentation system? Or do they just "check it with a flashlight"?
- Does the company or individual carry a valid business liability insurance policy to protect your home and furnishings against accidents?
- How long has the company been in this area?
- Does the company offer current references? (Don't hesitate to check them out!)
- Is the company in good standing with the Better Business Bureau and/or State Attorney General's office?

Proof of Certification

The CSIA Certified Chimney Sweep credential is issued for a 3-year period to individuals who pass the Certified Chimney Sweep examination. This rigorous test is based on knowledge of the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) 211 standards for fireplaces, chimneys, vents and solid fuel-burning appliances, and the Chimney Safety Institute of America's (CSIA) Successful Chimney Sweeping study manual. The Nebraska Chimney Sweep Association (NCSA) Certified Chimney and Venting Technicians credential is also issued for a period of three years. This examination is based on knowledge of the NFPA 211 standards, NFPA 54 standards, CABO One and Two Family Dwelling Codes, Uniform Building Codes and the CSIA's Successful Chimney Sweeping Manual. **These credentials are awarded to individuals, not companies.** Therefore, to ensure that chimney work in their home is performed by a CSIA or NCSA Certified technician, homeowners should request that the sweep display his or her photo identification badge. These badges, issued both by the CSIA and NCSA, include a photograph of the sweep, along with the sweep's Certification number and expiration date.

It is required that a CSIA Certified Chimney Sweep be present on each job in order for a company to advertise using the CSIA Certified Chimney Sweep logo.