

Extension Home Economics Get Rid Of Creosote

Woodburning stoves are becoming more prevalent, and unfortunately so are home fires that can result from improper care of that stove.

So, here are some suggestions on how to prevent such fires. A common cause is creosote build-up inside the chimney. Creosote is a shiny, black substance that is a by-product of wood combustion. It is highly flammable and if it gets thicker than one-half inch, it is likely to ignite and cause a chimney fire.

To prevent creosote build-up, burn dry wood only. Also, about once every week or ten days, burn a load of wood in the stove with the drafts open. This will help burn away any creosote.

About twice during the heating season, go up on the roof to check out the chimney. Using a flashlight, peer down into the chimney to see if there is a creosote build-up. If you suspect there is, clean the inside of the chimney by using a short piece of chain to break the stuff off. Or tie a rope to a steel brush with a weight on it and slide that up and down the chimney. If there's more build-up than you know how to get rid of, call in a heating expert.

Creosote build-up can also be a hazard with woodburning furnaces. But it doesn't usually present much of a problem with fireplaces. Fireplace fires are usually so hot that there is not much chance for creosote to accumulate in a fireplace chimney.

Buying Goods and Services On Time

Buying goods and services on time is practically a way of life these days. But, when you do buy items on credit or the installment plan, keep this in mind — when you sign on the dotted line, you have committed yourself to a legal agreement.

What happens if you default? Well, the creditor has a right to the secured property. And if you refuse to turn it over to him, he must obtain a court order to repossess it.

The law provides that repossessed property may be sold to satisfy your debt. Under the law you must be notified when and where the property will be sold, so you may bid on it or be ensured that it is being sold for a fair price.

If the property is sold for less than the balance of your debt, you may still be liable for the difference. If the sale results in an excess amount, you are entitled to that excess.

While you should never sell, hide or give away secured property, you don't have to give it up voluntarily. If you have a good reason not to pay, you may refuse to return the item and consult

an attorney. This will force the creditor to go to court, where you will have a chance to tell your side of the story.

Now let's talk about two other items: Can you go to jail if you can't pay? Can your wages be garnished?

First, you cannot be put in jail because you cannot pay a debt. And it is unlawful for a creditor to threaten to put you in jail, curse you, phone you repeatedly at odd hours, threaten you with injury or continue to contact you after you have hired an attorney and told the creditor to deal with your attorney.

And finally, wages. Under North Carolina law, your wages cannot be garnished for a credit transaction.

Avoiding Flim-Flam

Every year thousands of people are the victims of trickery and deception because someone has encouraged them to part with something of value or to surrender some legal right.

Why do we get caught up in flim-flam schemes? Sometimes we lose money because we are greedy. Someone tells us they will split a large sum of money they have found if we give them our savings first. If someone comes to you with this proposition, calmly refuse and then contact the police.

More often we are victims of salesmen who offer shoddy goods at high prices. We may be led to believe we will receive better products than those displayed or we may pay for one product and receive a less valuable one in the mail. If you order goods by mail, be sure to deal with a reputable firm. Buy brands of merchandise you already know and find out what the policy is on returning merchandise.

Door-to-door salesmen may be a problem, although some very good products are sold this way. If you are thinking about buying an expensive product, do not be pressured into a hasty sale, and be sure you know your rights.

If you sign a contract in your home for credit payments, the seller must give you a form that you can return within three days if you change your mind about the purchase. And, he must return any down payment you may have made.

Mail order insurance may sound like a good deal, but be careful when purchasing such a policy. Also, be leery of "miracle cures" for arthritis or obesity. The hope they offer is seldom justified.

If you feel you have been the victim of fraud or misrepresentation, contact your local Better Business Bureau or Merchants Association or the office of the Attorney General in Raleigh.

The peanut is really a bean, not a nut.

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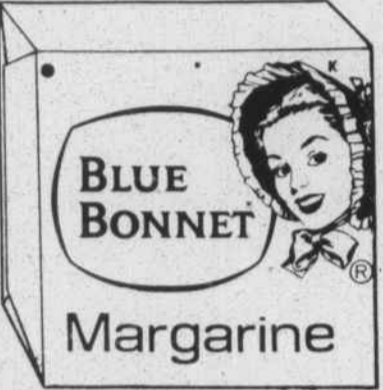
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