

'Safety Advice - Intro'

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, a fire, if not caught in time, is almost impossible to control and the results can be devastating.

We also recommend considering additional advice which your insurance company and local fire and rescue service can offer.

This advice and information is offered as general guidance. Before considering your 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 roof fires can be attributed to many different things, it is widely accepted that there are two main causes of thatch fires which are chimney related:

- ❖ **Heat transfer**
- ❖ **Ejected embers & sparks from the chimney**

Many thatch fires have been accredited to wood burners, multi-fuel stoves, flue malfunction, insufficient chimney height and poorly maintained chimneys.

Electrical Safety

The electrical circuits should be inspected every five years in accordance with the latest regulations.

All wiring 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.

If the supply to the property is overhead, check if it is insulated. If you are in any doubt contact your electricity supplier who will give further advice.



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 the alarms in the property will sound if one goes off.



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 (CO) is an extremely poisonous gas 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 1.8 meters.

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 such as HETAS so a registered chimney engineer can review the liner (if already installed) 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, which in turn can slow down flue gases leaving the chimney and build up heat in the flue. 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 will require the necessary approvals.

Open fires & Woodburners

If you are considering installing a wood-burner or similar contact HETAS who will advise on the most suitable appliance and liner for the property.

An open fire or multi-fuel appliance should be suitably lined. 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 readily available from many different sources and can be used to help you check that the moisture content of your seasoned wood is suitable to be used.



General Precautions

It is recommended that suitable fire extinguishers and a fire blanket in the kitchen are located in the property.

It is not recommended to have any bonfires and to discuss this with any neighbours who wish to do so to ensure they understand the risks that 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 recommended minimum size of 600mm x 900mm is normally advised.

Water Supplies

To assist the fire service in the event of a fire it is advisable to identify the location of your local fire hydrants. Additionally it is also useful to make a note of other possible 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

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

Ensure that any tradespeople have the required qualifications and are registered to the relevant approval bodies. You should also check that they carry the required levels of insurance.

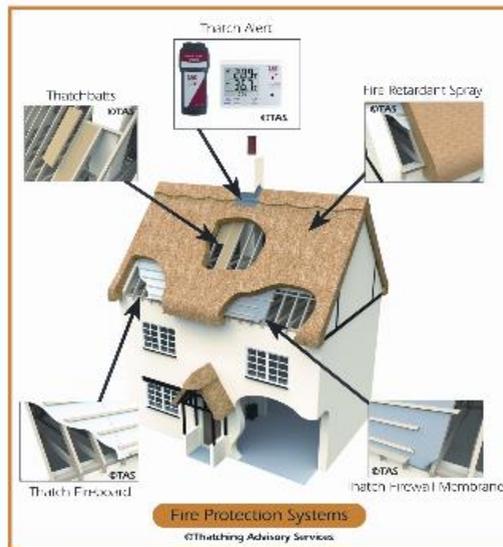
Fire Barriers

A range of fire barriers and systems and other specialist products such as fire retardant are available. These are designed to help reduce the effects of a thatch fire.

In most cases the physical barriers such as Thatch Firewall membrane or Thatch Fireboards are installed directly on top of the roof timbers, therefore will only be able to be fitted if the thatch is ever stripped off or you are building a new property or an extending an existing one.

It is also possible to use some fire barriers to underdraw an existing thatched roof. Because of the individual nature of thatched properties, please contact us for further information.

Thatch fire barriers will not eliminate the risk of fire, but they can act to reduce the possible levels of damage from a thatch fire and could reduce insurance premiums.



This document contains a summary of the additional information that is available at www.thatchingadvisoryservices.co.uk



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