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Over 70 years of excellence as hand tool manufacturers and distributors of equipment for the plumbing and drainage industry  
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## SMOKE PELLETS - WHERE AND HOW TO USE THEM

If in doubt about the condition of a chimney, or when an old chimney is to be put into use after a long period of being unused, it is advisable to have it smoke tested.

This is particularly relevant for chimneys built before the 1965 Building Regulations which required that all new chimneys be built with a suitable flue liner to protect the chimney structure. The purpose of the smoke test is to discover if there are any major defects which can cause a leak of fumes through the chimney or flue structure during normal operation.

A smoke test should be carried out by a qualified person using the following procedure which is based on the test described in British Standard BS6461:Part 1. There is a different procedure for smoke testing flues for gas fires. It is also recommended that this smoke test is carried out during the construction of traditional masonry chimneys and on completion of all chimney, or gas flue block installations.

It must be remembered that the purpose of the smoke test is to identify and deal with any faults which would cause fumes to escape during the normal operation of the appliance and chimney. By closing the bottom and top of the chimney during the test for chimneys or flues to be used with a solid fuel burning appliance, the smoke generated by the pellet, together with normal barometric conditions, will generate a positive pressure that would not be created during the normal use of the installation, which operates under negative pressure i.e. sucking in air and drawing the products of combustion up the flue.

The pressure created during the procedure is therefore more than capable of creating minor leakage of smoke from either joints in a traditional masonry chimney, or connections between pre-fabricated metal chimneys and flue pipes. Minor leakage detected during this test should therefore not be a major risk when the installation is used during normal operating conditions, providing the point of leakage does not indicate a fault that could get worse. However if significant or heavy smoke leakage is seen the cause must be investigated and rectified. Broken components, incorrect fitting and incomplete jointing of flue liners are the most common problems which cause major leakage and require remedial action.

1. If there is a solid fuel appliance or open fire appliance fitted at the base of the bottom of the chimney burn some newspaper in the fire/grate for 2 to 3 minutes to establish a flue draw. A longer warming up time may be needed with wet or cold flues. If there is no grate or fire box fitted use a blow lamp for 10 minutes or more to establish a flue draw. It should be realised that neither of these methods create the same temperatures or volume of hot gases that would normally be created whilst the appliance is in use. They therefore are intended to assist the testing and not simulate real conditions.

If the flue is to be used with a gas burning appliance, the smoke test should be carried out before the gas fire is fitted and a flue warmed by a blow lamp only.

2. For testing flues to be used with a solid fuel burning appliance place two 13gm smoke pellets on a surface that cannot be harmed by heat in the opening at the base of the flue or in the appliance if it is fitted. For flues to be used with a gas appliance use only one smoke pellet. Always follow the pellet manufacturers safety instructions.

3. Ignite the top edge of the pellets and, when smoke appears, seal the opening with a board or plate sealed at the edges, or if a solid fuel appliance is fitted close all doors, ashpit cover and vents. Do not seal off the base of the flue or opening if testing a flue for a gas appliance.

4. Check that the smoke rises out of the correct flue. When smoke begins rising out of the top of the chimney, seal the top of the flue, terminal or pot if the flue is to be used with a solid fuel appliance (i.e. use an inflated football bladder or plastic bag sealed in position with tape). Do not seal the top of the flue if it is to be used with gas appliance.

5. Examine the full length of the chimney for any leakage of smoke. If possible, check for signs of smoke leakage from wall cavities at the sides and back of the chimney, if it is built into a wall. Also check for smoke leakage at openings around windows near to the chimney and the roof space area.

6. If any smoke is seen, establish the point of leakage and carry out remedial work to correct any faults.

7. After completing the remedial work repeat the testing procedure until no major leakage or fault is apparent. Remove the closures at the top and bottom of the chimney.

All chimney systems or liners used for new chimney or relining must conform to Building Regulations, British Standards or have British Board of Agreement Approval certificate or similar test approval certificate acceptable to the local building control officer.



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Building control approval is necessary for building new chimneys and, in some cases for relining old chimneys particularly if some alteration or change of the heating appliance occurs.



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