



## **THE GUILD OF MASTER CHIMNEY SWEEPS**

*Powering chimney sweeping into the 21st Century*

[www.guildofmasterchimneysweeps.co.uk](http://www.guildofmasterchimneysweeps.co.uk)

### **Carbon Monoxide Protocol for chimney sweeps**

<https://www.guildofmasterchimneysweeps.co.uk/carbon-monoxide-protocol-actions-and-guidelines-for-sweeps/>

As a Solid Fuel industry leader, the Guild of Master Chimney Sweeps recognised there was no protocol for what a sweep should do if they are advised of or if they suspect a Carbon Monoxide (CO) incident. Very importantly, there was no protocol for what a sweep should not do. With this in mind, the Guild has produced the following CO protocol and advice.

**Sweeps** – you will often ask a customer if there have been any problems with their appliance. During casual conversation, you may be told that someone has been unwell in some way, or perhaps been to the doctors. Perhaps the reasons are unexplained and symptoms are unresolved. It may be reported that a CO alarm has gone off but the reason was not identified and no investigation undertaken. You may be told that someone has been exposed and this has been medically identified but it's still possible that you are the first person to look at the appliance. Or for some other reason you may simply suspect that someone has been exposed to CO.

In any event, if you suspect a CO incident then you must have a system in place for dealing with this and making your decision to sweep the flue or to preserve the evidence and report the incident.

#### **Protocol actions and guidelines.**

If on initial inspection the sweep believes that something to do with the installation may have been a contributory factor then advice should be sought because the issue may be investigated by Trading Standards rather than the HSE.

The sweep must gather some information before they undertake the sweeping operation to enable them to make a decision on what to do next and what advice to give.

The following should be ascertained before sweeping any flue following a CO incident or if you suspect a CO incident.

- a) Is it possible that anyone has been injured by CO poisoning.
- b) Is the property owner occupied or rented.
- c) When was the installation carried out.
- d) Has there been any significant changes to the installation, the room (such as new windows etc.) or the property as a whole (such as new kitchen with extractor fan

etc.) or to the chimney or flue (such as cowl, terminal or liner).

- e) If the answer to d) is yes then you need to know what these changes are and when they were done and if the stove has been used regularly since then.
- f) If anyone else has been to work on the stove or chimney recently and if so, how long ago and who. If the answers to the above suggest that there may be a professional who has carried out work on the installation in the recent months (less than 6 months) then the following additional will be information required.
- g) The date and time of the incident.
- h) Was there a CO alarm present and did this activate. If an alarm is present, make a note of its location and ask where the alarm was located when the occurrence happened. Record the make and model, photos are a good addition to written records. It might be that the alarm should be tested, so make sure this is preserved.
- i) Who was affected, to what extent and if medical help was required or have those affected been to a doctor? Please note that a negative test on a survivor for CO does not necessarily mean the survivor was not poisoned because tests tend to be after the survivor has been in the fresh air.

## **Actions**

If the answers to the above give rise to ongoing concerns, then the sweep should take action and avoid sweeping the chimney or disturbing the evidence by removing a baffle or cleaning access. If in doubt, don't touch it, delay sweeping, take photos and notes and leave all the appropriate warning labels and notices to make sure nobody uses the installation. Either make a report under RIDDOR or seek advice on the next step from a suitable organisation – listed below.

HSE – Form for reporting a dangerous incident:

<https://extranet.hse.gov.uk/lfserver/external/F2508DOE>

Guild of Master Chimney Sweeps – [info@guildofmasterchimneysweeps.co.uk](mailto:info@guildofmasterchimneysweeps.co.uk) or call 01226 242357. [www.guildofmasterchimneysweeps.co.uk](http://www.guildofmasterchimneysweeps.co.uk)

CO-Gas Safety Society - Email Stephanie Trotter, OBE [office@co-gassafety.co.uk](mailto:office@co-gassafety.co.uk) Tel. 01983 564 165 or 01483 561633 or 07803 088688 [www.co-gassafety.co.uk](http://www.co-gassafety.co.uk)

If the sweep is advised or decides that the incident could not be investigated for a prosecution then they are free to sweep the chimney and provide all the correct advice to the customer to help prevent a repeat of the incident. However, someone who has been badly poisoned by CO may need to consider his or her options (e.g. to prove poisoning for medical treatment or a civil legal action) before evidence is changed.

On all occasions the CO Alarm must be checked and if it is incorrectly sited then advice should given on where it should be placed.