

## Installing a Fireplace

### Alberta's Safety System

Alberta Municipal Affairs works in partnership with the Safety Codes Council, municipalities, corporations, agencies, and other organizations, to deliver effective community-focused public safety programs and services to Albertans.

Careful planning, installation and proper maintenance are the keys to safe and effective fireplaces. Installing or modifying any fireplace system is complicated. To achieve high-quality and safe performance from your fireplace, consider having your fireplace system professionally installed.

**For explanations of any of the technical requirements or standards listed below, please use the contact information on the back of this brochure. Making changes at the planning stage can save you money, rather than making costly corrections after construction. Certified safety codes officers will give you an inspection report(s) and follow-up on any ongoing problems to make sure your project is safe.**

### Factory-built fireplaces

Factory-built fireplaces and their installation shall conform to CAN/ULC-S610, "*Factory-Built Fireplaces*". Factory-built fireplaces must be installed and used in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

**NOTE:** Factory-built fireplaces that have decorative gas logs must be certified.

Most factory-built fireplaces, sometimes referred to as "built-in fireplaces," are designed for installation in a wall, with one or two sides of the firebox open for viewing.

### Importance of permits

The *Safety Codes Act* requires that permits in Alberta be obtained prior to commencing work on any buildings covered by the Alberta Building and Fire Codes, the Canadian Electrical Code, the Gas Code, or the National Plumbing Code.

Permits are part of a process to access compliance to a minimum standard of construction safety for the benefit of all Albertans. If construction projects are undertaken without required permits, the owner may be subject to penalties and extra costs incurred to bring a project into compliance.

As the property owner, you are responsible to obtain all necessary permits. A contractor can look after this on your behalf; however, you should specify in writing, who will get the required permits. Some jurisdictions may require a letter of authorization before a contractor can apply for permit(s) on your behalf.

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These are also commonly known as “zero-clearance” fireplaces. This term is misleading because it implies the fireplace does not need clearances to combustible material.

Manufacturers’ instructions will refer to “framing spacers,” designed to ensure combustible material used in construction is a safe distance from the firebox.

**IMPORTANT:** All components, including chimneys and fans, must carry labels indicating they were tested to be compatible with that particular firebox.

**Never** substitute a component that has not been specifically designed for the unit you are installing. You may create a fire hazard that places lives at risk.

### Site-built solid-fuel burning fireplaces

Site-built fireplaces are usually masonry or stone, supported by a non-combustible foundation. These fireplace installations must conform to the current edition of the Alberta Building Code and should only be constructed by a qualified tradesperson.

### Free-standing solid-fuel burning fireplaces

Make sure you have at least 1,200 mm (4 ft.) of clearance between the open sides of a free-standing firebox and the wall (or any combustibles), and at least 900 mm (3 ft.) clearance around the closed sides of the firebox.

Clearances for the closed sides of the firebox may be reduced if tested and labelled heat shields are provided.

### Benefits of getting a permit

When you get a permit, certified safety codes officers (inspectors) will:

- give you expert advice,
- review your plans to find any potential problems,
- inspect your project, and
- make sure your project meets the Alberta Building Code.

Making changes at the planning stage can save you money, rather than making costly corrections after construction. Certified safety codes officers will give you an inspection report(s) and follow-up on deficiencies to make sure your project is safe and in compliance.

### Where do you get a permit?

Permits are available through municipalities that administer the *Safety Codes Act* and through agencies that provide inspection services on behalf of municipalities or the province. If you don’t know whether your municipality issues permits, contact the Alberta Safety Codes Authority (ASCA) at 1-877-413-6725 or visit [safetycodes.ab.ca/ASCA](http://safetycodes.ab.ca/ASCA).

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**IMPORTANT:** A free-standing fireplace must not be connected to a chimney flue serving a gas or oil heating system or to a chimney flue that serves another wood-burning or coal-burning appliance.

### Steel liners

Steel liners for fireplaces shall conform to CAN/ULC-S639, “Standard for Steel Liner Assemblies for Solid-Fuel Burning Masonry Fireplaces” and shall be installed in accordance with the installation instructions in that standard.

### Chimneys

Factory-built chimneys serving solid-fuel-burning appliances and their installation shall conform to CAN/ULC-S629, “650°C Factory-Built Chimneys”.

**IMPORTANT:** The chimney for a factory-built fireplace must be specifically designed, tested and labeled for the particular unit.

### Clearance to combustible material

Combustible material shall **not** be placed on or near the face of a fireplace or within 150 mm (6”) of the fireplace opening. Except where a combustible material projects more than 38 mm (1.5”) out from the face of the fireplace and is above the opening, the combustible material shall be not less than 300 mm (12”) above the top of the opening.

Metal exposed to the interior of a fireplace, such as the damper control mechanism, shall have at least a 50 mm (2”) clearance from any combustible material on the face of the fireplace where the metal penetrates through the face of the fireplace.

### Applying for a building permit

When applying for a building permit, you must submit the following information to your local authority:

- details of the project or occupancy to be covered by the permit.
- details of the land on which the project will be located, including a description that will easily identify and locate the building lot.
- plans, specifications and other documents showing, in detail, the proposed occupancy of all parts of the building. state the value of the proposed project.

### Hire qualified tradespeople

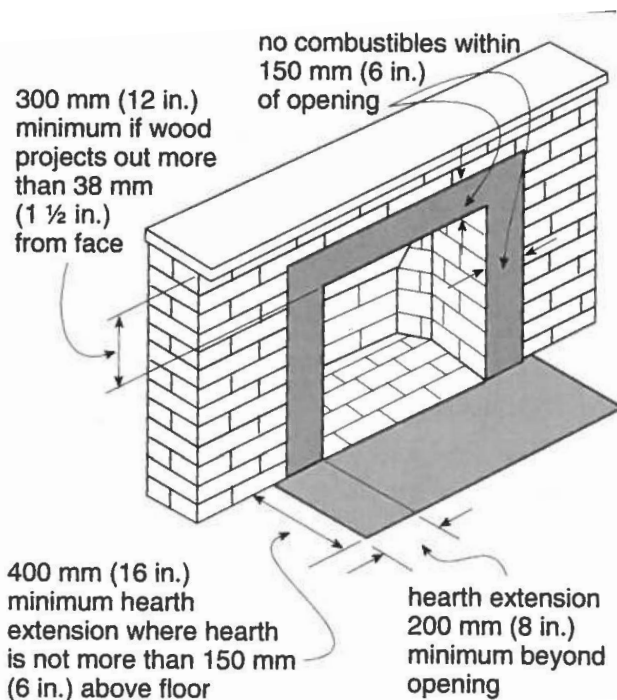
Specific trades such as electricians, plumbers and gasfitters must be certified to work in Alberta. To find out if the tradespeople you are hiring need to be certified in Alberta or to verify an individual’s status, you may contact *The Apprenticeship and Industry Training* office by calling 310-0000.

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The clearance of combustible material above heat-circulating duct openings shall be **at least**

- 300 mm (12") where the combustible material projects more than 38 mm (1.5") from the face;
- 150 mm (6") where projection is less than 38 mm (1.5").

At least 100 mm (4") clearance shall be provided between the back and sides of a fireplace and combustible framing, except that a 50 mm (2") clearance is permitted where the fireplace is located in an exterior wall.






### Hearth extension

Fireplaces shall have a non-combustible hearth extending at least 400 mm (16") in front of the fireplace opening and projecting at least 200 mm (8") beyond each side of the opening. Always check the installation instructions as there may be additional requirements.

#### More information:

##### Alberta Municipal Affairs

Community & Technical Support  
16<sup>th</sup> Floor, Commerce Place  
10155 - 102 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L4

 Toll-free: 1-866-421-6929  
 [safety.services@gov.ab.ca](mailto:safety.services@gov.ab.ca)  
 [municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca](http://municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca)

##### Safety Codes Council




Suite 1000  
10665 - Jasper Ave NW  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S9

Toll-free within Alberta:

 1-888-413-0099  
1-888-424-5134  
 [webmaster@safetycodes.ab.ca](mailto:webmaster@safetycodes.ab.ca)  
 [safetycodes.ab.ca](http://safetycodes.ab.ca)

##### Alberta Safety Codes Authority (ASCA)

Toll-free within Alberta:

 1-877-413-6725  
 [askasca@safetycodes.ab.ca](mailto:askasca@safetycodes.ab.ca)  
 [safetycodes.ab.ca/ASCA](http://safetycodes.ab.ca/ASCA)

#### Call (or click) before you dig!

Alberta One Call will locate utility lines on your property. Call or click before you start any project that involves digging in your yard. Alberta One Call will locate gas, water, electricity, drainage, telephone and cable TV lines. Allow at least two full working days for Alberta One Call to locate your utility lines.

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### Combustion air

**Site-built masonry fireplaces** must follow procedures for providing adequate combustion air supply as prescribed under the current edition of the Alberta Building Code.

**Factory-built fireplaces** must have combustion air provided in accordance with manufacturers' installation instructions.

### Fireplace inserts

Fireplace inserts must be installed according to their respective listing requirements. Inserts must **not** be installed in factory-built fireplaces unless the listing specifically allows the combination.

Fireplace inserts and hearth-mounted stoves vented through the throat of a fireplace shall conform to ULC-S628-93, "*Fireplace Inserts*".

The installation of fireplace inserts and hearth-mounted stoves vented through the throat of a fireplace shall conform to CAN/CSA-B365, "*Installation Code for Solid-Fuel Burning Appliances and Equipment*".

**NOTE:** The throat of every fireplace shall be equipped with a metal damper large enough to cover the full area of the throat opening when the appliance is not operational.

### Gas-burning fireplaces

Gas-burning fireplaces must be approved by an acceptable testing agency (e.g., Canadian Standards Association, Canadian Gas Association, Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada, Intertek Testing Services, Omni Testing Laboratories, etc.).

### Carbon monoxide alarms

Carbon monoxide alarms shall be installed in every home containing a solid-fuel-burning appliance, as required in the current edition of the Alberta Building Code. The alarms are also recommended for existing homes.

### Gas permits

Gas permits are required to install or modify any gas-burning fireplace and for natural gas or propane log lighters installed in any wood-burning fireplace.



*These brochures may be updated periodically. They have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes and regulations currently in effect.*