

Wood Creek Lodge Fireplace and Flue Replacement Project 2022 - 2023 Updated 06.01.2024

Information for all owners and contractors/chimney sweeps regarding the fireplaces and flues at Wood Creek Lodge.

Important Notes: Quick info for all chimney sweeps or annual inspectors

On January 30th, 2023, Todd Carroll with the Town of Mount Crested Butte officially closed out all of the permits for all units at Wood Creek Lodge, and authorized the use of all fireplaces to burn wood that were connected to the new correct sized flue piping.

There are 30 Units at Wood Creek, 28 of which have fireplaces and may or may not choose to burn wood. Units #108 and #109 are unable to burn since they have no flue piping behind their walls. 15 units opted to go with 6 inch flue piping, and 13 units opted to go with 8 inch flue piping. At this time 21 units are cleared to burn wood, while 6 units are not since their original fireplaces are not attached to the required 8 inch flue piping, but instead are fitted for 6 inch flue piping for a future zero clearance fireplace. One unit #406 has 8 inch flue piping attached to their original firebox, but their fireplace is currently covered over with drywall. **Please note that the WC chases will not be opened again until all flue piping needs to be replaced again in another 30-40 years.**

Every flue inside of every chase at Wood Creek was replaced in 2022 with either 6 inch or 8 inch insulated Dura Tech self locking piping which creates a closed system and stays in place not allowing any flame to escape. It is the top flue piping on the market today. At each floor stop within every chase there is a metal fire stop as required by code.

All original Heatilator fireplaces in units are attached to new 8 inch insulated Dura Tech flue pipes and are able to burn wood, **with the exception of units #101, #203, #204, #302, #401, and #405. These units are unable and not cleared to burn wood until a new zero clearance fireplace is installed in that unit and connected to the existing 6 inch Dura Tech flue piping behind their wall leading to the chase.** These owners chose to keep their original fireplace, but opted to go with the less expensive 6 inch flue piping. These owners either have electric inserts, electric wall units, or opted to fit their unit for a future owner to install a zero clearance unit at some point in the future.

The original Heatilator fireboxes connected to 8 inch flue piping and cleared to burn have their dampers located at the top of the chimney flue and are opened and closed with a cable that passes down through the flue piping and is operational from the inside of the original firebox. These units are #102, #103, #201, #205, #206 #301, #303, #305, #406, #407, #505, #506, and #507. Note Unit #406 is drywalled over and does not have a damper cable installed, and is not cleared to burn. If a future owner removes the drywall, a damper cable can be installed to allow the burning of wood. Please note that refractory panels, floors and other parts to this original Heatilator firebox can be replaced due to any degradation if needed.

Units whose owners opted to install either the Astra 24 TD zero clearance fireplace or the Cozy Heat Z42 zero clearance fireplace are all attached to new 6 inch insulated Dura Tech flue piping, and are cleared to burn wood. There are no dampers in these zero

clearance fireplaces since they are closed systems with a glass door attached to the front of each fireplace.

Additional Notes:

Units #302 and #406 have drywalled over their original Heatilator fireboxes, but during the replacement flue project, flue piping was installed behind their drywall in case a future owner wants to have a fireplace. Unit 302 has new 6 inch insulated flue piping behind its wall for a future zero clearance fireplace, and Unit 406 has new 8 inch insulated flue piping that is hooked up to the original Heatilator fireplace behind the wall for future use. A damper cable will need to be installed to this fireplace before it is cleared to burn wood.

Unit #203 has drywalled over their original Heatilator fireplace and installed an electric wall unit fireplace on bumped out drywall. Behind this wall electric fireplace and drywall, the chase is fitted with new 6 inch insulated Dura Tech piping. In this case if the owner wants a wood burning unit, they would need to remove the original Heatilator fireplace from within their unit and install and hook up a new zero clearance fireplace, all easily done from within the owner's unit.

Units #101, #102, #401, and #405 have electric inserts placed inside of their original Heatilator fireboxes. Unit's #101, #401, and #405 opted to go with new 6 inch flue piping within their chase and are therefore unable to burn wood since they have the original Heatilator fireplace which needs to be connected to 8 inch flue piping in order to be cleared to burn wood. If those owners or a new owner wants to burn wood in these units, they would need to install a new zero clearance fireplace and connect that to the 6 inch piping now behind their wall.

Unit #102 has 8 inch piping connected to their original Heatilator fireplace and is cleared to burn, but chooses not to burn, and has placed an electric insert within their original fireplace.

Requirements:

All contractors, inspectors and chimney sweeps must reference the EXCEL spreadsheet showing Wood Creek's Master Flue/Fireplace dated June 1st, 2024 to fully understand and avoid confusion before completing any work.

Any installation of a new fireplace must be approved by the Board and CBL before any construction begins. Any new fireplace installation must be a zero clearance fireplace. All approved installations must be permitted by the City of MT. Crested Butte.

Listed below are the web links for the two approved zero clearance fireplaces installed at Wood Creek in 2022.

The Astra 24 TD https://supremem.com/astra_24TD.php

The Cozy Heat Z42 <https://www.kozyheat.com/product/z42-wood-burning-fireplace/>

Owners and installers must ensure that the fireplace choice meets height drafting requirements prior to purchase and install.

A brief history of this project...

In March of 2020, there was a chimney flue fire in unit #306's flue which triggered a building alarm. The fire department was called and were on premise within 7 minutes. The fire department sprayed cautionary water on the top of the NE chimney chase to ensure there was no fire danger to the building, and determined there was not. They taped off unit #306's fireplace and instructed the owner not to burn. The owner did as instructed by the MTCBFD. Other owners at Wood Creek continued to burn wood in their fireplaces.

The Covid-19 virus was now in full force in Gunnison County and in the town of Crested Butte. The WC Board and CBL decided to authorize level 2 and level 3 fire inspections in a few of the unit's at WC. Rick Church of High Mountain Hearth located in Delta, CO performed these inspections. These inspections were completed July 29th, 2020, and photographic evidence showed that the original construction had no fire stops in the chases and that the original flues inside the chases were uninsulated, thin, and touched combustible material, basically wall insulation that served as a fire stop. There was no real fire stop. These 1980's standards would not pass today's fire codes.

It was decided by the Board and CBL to not allow the burning of wood in any fireplaces since the inspections showed that the flues were compromised.

After the Board and CBL received the inspection reports on August 26, 2020 they went about the process of researching the replacement of the flues so the complex could burn again. Over the next few months the Board understood that some owners wanted to replace their entire firebox, while others decided to keep their old ones.

CBL and the Board approved a bid from Rick Church and High Mountain Hearth In September of 2020 to clean all original flues, insulate the first foot inside the original Heatilator dampers, and screw down those dampers so they could not be used to burn wood until the HOA paid for and replaced the original flues. Signs were ordered and hung from all fireplaces informing owners and renters to refrain from burning any wood. This was the Board's decision and not mandated by the Fire Department. The Board proactively decided to discontinue wood burning until the original flues were replaced.

Over the next 1 1/2 years CBL and the Board went through the process of discovery on who we would want to replace the flues and some of the fireboxes. The Board worked with the HOA and talked to numerous contractors that could handle the scope of the job to replace the flues at Wood Creek. Some contractors wanted to replace all flues and all fireplaces, some were unable to handle the scope of the project, others suggested a hybrid approach. **Gary Corman (with Inside & Out) suggested the Hybrid approach to the project, and this solution turned out to be the most cost effective and reasonable for the HOA. It allowed for all flues in every chase at Wood Creek to be replaced, but allowed for owners to keep their original fireplace or upgrade to a new zero clearance fireplace that would meet the standards to be 2020 EPA certified.**

The Board and a majority of owners decided to use Gary Corman with Inside and Out Hearth and Patio based out of Montrose, CO rather than Rick Church of High Mountain Hearth based out of Delta, CO. After comparing the two bids for replacement of the flues and some/all fireplaces, the bids were significantly different with Rick's being much higher and more invasive as he wanted to replace all fireplaces (regardless of wear) and flues rather than just the flues. Gary agreed with Rick's Inspections regarding the flues, their deterioration, and their install not meeting today's code. Where they significantly disagreed was with the replacement of all fireboxes in addition to all of the flues in the chases.

The original Heatilator fireboxes are old, but intact. Every year the flues are cleaned out for creosote buildup and the fireboxes are inspected. If any refractory panels (side panels) or floors need replaced in the original Heatilator fireplaces, the recommended repairs are completed shortly after inspection. This has been the practice since the building first opened for residents. Gary stated that the fireboxes can last for many more years, as long as deteriorated panels or floors are changed out when needed.

Please be aware that the fireplaces were never "condemned" by anyone including the fire department. The Wood Creek Board and CBL decided to discontinue wood burning until the original flues were replaced.

The last inspection with regard to replacement of refractory panels or floor panels was done in April of 2019. This inspection was done before Covid-19 took over Gunnison County in the spring of 2020. Below are Rick's notes (for historical purposes) from that report before Wood Creek replaced all flues and some fireplaces.

These are Rick's notes from the 4/2019 inspection for the fireplace boxes:

101-replace rear box and floor refractory
103-small cracks, not a problem now
201- rear refractory replaced
202-same
206-floor and rear refractory replaced
207-rear refractory replaced
303-same
305-same
306-rear refractory has small cracks, not an issue at this time
403-rear refractory replaced
405- rear refractory has small cracks, not an issue at this time
504-replaced defective box floor
505- rear refractory has small cracks, not an issue at this time

These recommendations were completed shortly after his inspection. As you can see from Rich Church's notes above, any compromised piece of metal in the original Heatilator fireplace can be replaced at any time. **This is ongoing maintenance. If time breaks down the structural integrity of the original firebox and replacing a floor panel or refractory panel is no longer an option, the owner will be able to replace their original fireplace with a new zero clearance firebox from inside their unit.**

In June of 2019 all owners at the advice of Rick Church also installed Heat Shields on the adjacent wall next to their open fireplace. He stated that the heat from the fireplaces could dry out the 2x4's behind the side drywall and make them combustible. The majority of ownership believed this was an unnecessary expense at roughly \$352 per unit. Since then, multiple sources have stated this expense was unnecessary, but the Board is still requiring anyone who has an original Heatilator fireplace to keep the heat shield up. That is why you will see some units with heat shields, and the units with the new zero clearance fireplaces without the fire shields since they are zero clearance.

Note: Most 2020 EPA compliant zero clearance fireplaces use 6 inch insulated flue piping, but there are a handful of zero clearance fireplaces that are able to mount to an 8 inch flue pipe. All units at Wood Creek that opted to go with a new zero clearance fireplace are attached to 6 inch insulated flue piping at Wood Creek. Owners that opted to keep their original firebox and chose to go with 8 inch flue piping are now connected to that insulated 8 inch piping

regardless of whether they close to burn wood or not. Some owners that kept their original Heatilator fireplace but opted to go with the cheaper 6 inch flue piping are not cleared to burn since this 6 inch piping cannot be attached to the original Heatilator fireplace. Owners that walled over their original fire box had the choice to choose 8 inch or 6 inch insulated flue piping. Some chose 8 inch and some choose 6 inch. All of these units are identified in the spread sheet. **Please see the WC Master Flue/Fireplace EXCEL spread sheet dated June 1st 2024.**

The Wood Creek HOA had numerous meetings over two years (2020 - 2022) regarding the flues, fireplaces, options other than wood burning etc, and the majority of the owners decided to continue with wood burning options.

The Board decided to allow owners to either keep their original firebox, or change it out for a new 2020 EPA compliant zero clearance fireplace. The HOA was special assessed in two payments and the final payments were due in August of 2022. Gary Corman with Inside & Out coordinated with the town of MT. Crested Butte, and began replacement of flues, and installation of some new fireboxes on July 11th, 2022. The project was completed on September 10th with some minor cleanup that took place over the next few days. **Note: due to some miscommunication between Gary Corman and the Town of Mt. Crested Butte, the new flues and all fireplaces were not officially cleared to burn wood until January 2023.**

The Board and the city of Mt Crested Butte are satisfied that the fireboxes and flues are safe to use. In fact they are safer to use now then when they were first installed when the building was initially constructed. The flues are insulated and connected together with locking joints and the fire stops are actually present unlike the original construction. No combustible material is in contact with any flue in any chase.

The installation of the new fireplaces and new flue hookups is a much safer fireplace/flue system we originally had when the building was built.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey Sloss
Wood Creek Lodge Board President
June 1st, 2024