

10 “BURNING” QUESTIONS

Answers to the Top 10 Questions about Operating a Catalytic Wood Stove

1. “What does the catalytic combustor do?”

It burns smoke by cutting in half the temperature at which the smoke will ignite. This can generate 50% more useful heat while reducing pollutants up to 90% or more.

2. “How can I tell if the combustor is working?”

Take a look at what’s coming out of your chimney. If the combustor is working, you’ll see some white vapor that dissipates quickly, but little or no gray/brown smoke or smoke odor, especially when compared to what comes out when the combustor is bypassed.

3. “I’ve heard small, hot fires are best... is this true with a catalytic combustor?”

No. Full loads and long, low to moderate burns are most efficient. You’ll enjoy burn times twice as long in a slow burn mode, and 50% longer even at moderate burn rates. This makes it easier to heat through the night too.

4. “Must the combustor be glowing to be working?”

No. It will glow at times, but it can work very effectively at temperatures below the 1000°F level at which it will begin to glow.

5. “Will burning newsprint harm the combustor?”

No. The use of newsprint for kindling is no problem. It will not harm the combustor. Burning nothing but newspaper might not be a good idea. It makes a poor fuel.

6. “Is an ‘extra hot’ fire needed to make the combustor work?”

No. A routine start-up with a moderately hot fire or a good running coal bed will achieve combustor light-off, and the combustor will continue to function for hours with a solid, self-sustaining fire or good bed of coals.

7. “How often must maintenance be performed?”

On average, plan on brushing off your combustor with a soft brush, like a new paintbrush, two or three times in a season. Be sure to follow the stove manufacturer’s instructions.

8. “Can I burn green or improperly dried wood?”

Yes...if you have to burn unseasoned wood it will burn as well or better than a non-cat stove and will not harm the combustor. But...it’s not the best practice because you’ll lose efficiency, as you would in any type of stove, using this kind of fuel.

9. “I’ve heard these combustors can be damaged by burning lots of different things. Just how finicky are they?”

Not that finicky...really...if you burn what’s supposed to be burned in a woodstove. Burn natural wood – hardwood or soft – and you can use some newspaper for kindling. Stay away from painted wood, treated wood, trash, and chemically treated artificial logs. Some of these things probably are not very healthful to burn in your home, either.

10. “How can I tell when the combustor needs to be replaced?”

A combustor can last up to 20 years depending on installation, environmental conditions, fuel and usage. Take a look at what’s coming out of your chimney. If you’re getting more and darker smoke, less heat, and this Situation isn’t reversed with normal maintenance or a major cleaning, it probably needs replacement. You may want to have it checked by your sweep. Also, if the combustor is broken and missing large pieces, it should be replaced.