

CALGARY FIREPLACES

Wood-Burning Fireplaces & Stoves

Wood stove and masonry fireplace installation,
WETT certification, and chimney systems for
Calgary

25 Expert Answers from Fireplace IQ

calgaryfireplaces.com/construction-brain

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How much does a cord of seasoned birch firewood cost delivered in Calgary?

Seasoned birch firewood in Calgary typically costs \$280-\$350 per full cord delivered, depending on the supplier, delivery distance, and seasonal demand. Birch is considered a premium hardwood for burning and commands higher prices than softer woods like poplar or pine.

Birch is an excellent choice for Calgary fireplaces and wood stoves because it burns hot, produces minimal smoke when properly seasoned, and creates relatively little creosote buildup in chimneys. The white bark makes it visually appealing for indoor storage, and birch splits easily for kindling. However, birch must be properly seasoned for 12-18 months to reach the ideal moisture content of 15-20% — burning green or wet birch produces excessive smoke and creosote.

Calgary's long heating season from October through April means you'll use more firewood than most Canadian cities. A typical Calgary home with a wood-burning fireplace or stove as supplemental heating uses 2-4 cords per winter, depending on how frequently you burn and the size of your heating area. During those brutal -25°C to -35°C cold snaps that can last for weeks, a high-efficiency EPA-certified wood stove can meaningfully reduce your furnace load and provide reliable heat even during power outages.

Firewood pricing fluctuates seasonally in Calgary — expect to pay premium prices (\$320-\$350/cord) if you're buying in October or November when demand peaks. The best value comes from ordering in spring or early summer when suppliers offer \$280-\$320/cord for fall delivery. Many Calgary firewood suppliers require a minimum order of 2-3 cords for free delivery, with smaller loads incurring \$50-\$75 delivery fees.

Always verify that firewood is properly seasoned before accepting delivery. Seasoned birch should have moisture content below 20% (test with a moisture meter), visible cracks in the end grain, bark that's loose or falling off, and should sound hollow when two pieces are knocked together. Wet or green wood burns poorly, creates excessive smoke, and accelerates creosote buildup in your chimney — a serious fire hazard that requires more frequent professional chimney cleaning.

If you're burning wood regularly in Calgary, annual chimney inspection and cleaning is essential. The combination of heavy use during our long heating season and potential creosote buildup makes professional chimney maintenance critical for safety. A WETT-certified chimney sweep should inspect and clean your system annually, typically costing \$200-\$350 in Calgary.

Need help finding a WETT-certified fireplace or chimney professional? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors through the Calgary Construction Network for chimney maintenance, wood stove installation, or fireplace services.

What species of firewood burns cleanest in a Calgary wood stove?

Hardwoods like birch, maple, and ash burn cleanest in Calgary wood stoves, producing the least creosote buildup and highest heat output per cord. Among locally available species, white birch is often considered the gold standard for clean burning, followed closely by Manitoba maple and green ash.

Hardwood species burn cleaner because of their dense cellular structure and lower resin content. When properly seasoned to below 20% moisture content, hardwoods produce more complete combustion with less smoke and fewer volatile compounds that condense as creosote in your chimney. This is particularly important in Calgary's climate, where wood stoves often run continuously during extended cold periods from December through February, accumulating more operating hours and creosote deposits than stoves in milder climates.

Locally available clean-burning species in the Calgary area include:

White birch produces excellent heat output with minimal smoke and creosote when properly seasoned. It lights easily, burns steadily, and leaves fine ash. Paper birch bark makes excellent natural kindling.

Manitoba maple (box elder) is abundant in Alberta and burns very cleanly when seasoned. It's softer than eastern hard maple but still produces good heat with low creosote formation.

Green ash burns hot and clean with minimal sparking. Common in Calgary's river valleys and readily available from local suppliers.

Avoid softwoods like pine, spruce, and fir for regular burning in your wood stove. These species contain high resin levels that create more creosote buildup and require more frequent chimney cleaning. However, they work well as kindling to start fires due to their quick ignition.

Proper seasoning is more important than species selection. Even the cleanest-burning hardwood will smoke heavily and create dangerous creosote levels if burned green or wet. Firewood should be split, stacked with good airflow, and seasoned for 12-18 months to reach the ideal moisture content below 20%. In Calgary's dry climate, properly stacked wood often seasons faster than in humid regions.

Calgary's chinook winds create unique considerations for wood burning. During rapid pressure changes, natural chimney draft can reverse temporarily, causing smoke to backdraft into your home. A wind-directional chimney cap helps prevent this, and you should avoid loading your stove heavily when Environment Canada forecasts chinook conditions.

Annual chimney cleaning is essential with any wood species in Calgary's climate. Even clean-burning hardwoods will deposit some creosote over a full heating season of regular use. A WETT-certified chimney sweep

should inspect and clean your system annually, typically in late summer before the heating season begins. This service costs \$200-\$400 in Calgary and is required by most home insurance policies.

Source your firewood from reputable local suppliers who can verify species and seasoning time. Expect to pay \$200-\$350 per full cord for seasoned hardwood in the Calgary area. Avoid buying wood from unknown sources, as green or mixed loads can contain poor-burning species that increase maintenance requirements.

Need help finding a WETT-certified installer or chimney service professional? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified wood-burning specialists through the Calgary Construction Network.

Q3

How do I improve the draft on my wood-burning fireplace during calm Calgary winter days?

Poor draft on calm winter days is a common problem for Calgary wood-burning fireplaces, especially during high-pressure systems that often accompany our coldest weather. The solution involves understanding how Calgary's extreme cold and atmospheric conditions affect chimney performance, then implementing both immediate fixes and longer-term improvements.

Understanding Calgary's Draft Challenges

Calgary's winter weather creates unique draft problems that don't occur in milder climates. During calm, extremely cold periods (often -25°C to -35°C), the dense cold air outside creates maximum draft potential, but several factors can still cause poor performance. The extreme temperature differential between your warm house and the frigid outdoor air should theoretically create excellent draft, but calm conditions mean there's no wind to assist the natural convection process. Additionally, high-pressure weather systems that bring our clearest, coldest days also suppress natural chimney draft by creating downward atmospheric pressure.

Immediate Solutions for Better Draft

Start by **warming the flue** before lighting your main fire. Crumple newspaper, light it, and hold it up into the damper area for 30-60 seconds to establish initial upward airflow. In Calgary's extreme cold, the chimney mass becomes deeply chilled, and this thermal shock treatment helps overcome the initial resistance. Open a window slightly on the same floor as the fireplace to provide combustion air — modern Calgary homes are built tight for energy efficiency, and without adequate air supply, the fire will struggle regardless of chimney condition.

Check that your **damper is fully open** and that nothing is restricting the flue. Birds' nests, ice buildup, or debris can block airflow, and Calgary's freeze-thaw cycles during chinook events can cause ice formations in chimneys. If you haven't had a chimney inspection recently, blockages are more common than homeowners realize, especially in older masonry chimneys that may have deteriorated mortar or structural issues.

Longer-Term Draft Improvements

A **chimney cap with wind directional features** can significantly improve draft consistency during calm conditions. These caps create a venturi effect that draws air up the chimney even without wind assistance. Given Calgary's chinook winds, choose a cap designed for variable wind conditions rather than a basic rain cap.

Consider the **chimney height relative to your roofline**. The general rule is that the chimney should extend at least 3 feet above the roof penetration and 2 feet above any roof line within 10 feet horizontally. Calgary homes often have complex rooflines that create wind shadows and downdrafts, particularly problematic during calm conditions when there's no prevailing wind to clear these dead air zones.

Chimney liner condition is critical for consistent draft. Many older Calgary homes have deteriorated clay tile liners or oversized masonry flues that create poor draft characteristics. A properly sized stainless steel liner (typically 6-8 inches for most residential wood stoves) dramatically improves draft consistency and reduces the impact of weather conditions on performance.

Professional Assessment Needed

Poor draft can indicate serious safety issues beyond just inconvenience. **Cracked chimney liners, damaged mortar joints, or structural problems** can cause dangerous backdrafting that fills your home with smoke and carbon monoxide. Calgary's extreme temperature cycling and chinook events accelerate chimney deterioration faster than in most Canadian cities.

A **WETT-certified technician** should inspect your entire chimney system if draft problems persist. The inspection costs \$250-\$400 in Calgary but can identify problems ranging from simple blockages to major structural issues requiring repair. Given that most Calgary wood-burning fireplaces operate heavily from October through April, reliable draft isn't just about comfort — it's about safety during our long heating season.

When to Call Professionals

Any persistent draft problems, visible chimney damage, or smoke entering your room requires immediate professional attention. Don't attempt to modify chimney height, install caps, or repair structural issues yourself — this work requires proper equipment, safety training, and often building permits for modifications.

Need help finding a WETT-certified fireplace technician? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified professionals through the Calgary Construction Network for a comprehensive chimney inspection and draft

improvement recommendations.

Can I install a wood-burning fireplace in a Calgary infill home on a narrow lot?

Yes, you can install a wood-burning fireplace in a Calgary infill home, but the narrow lot creates specific challenges with chimney placement and clearance requirements that require careful planning and professional design.

The primary challenge on narrow infill lots is meeting the **Alberta Building Code clearance requirements for chimney termination**. The chimney must extend at least 3 feet above the roof penetration point and 2 feet above any roof surface within 10 feet horizontally. On a narrow lot with neighboring homes close by, this often means a taller chimney system to clear nearby rooflines and structures. Additionally, the chimney cannot terminate within 6 feet of any window, door, or air intake on your home or neighboring properties — a restriction that can be difficult to satisfy on tight 25-foot or 33-foot infill lots.

Chimney routing through the home is another consideration. Infill homes often have complex rooflines, multiple stories, and open-concept layouts that make finding a straight vertical path for the chimney challenging. The Class A insulated stainless steel chimney system (required for wood-burning installations) needs to run as straight as possible from the fireplace to the roof termination. Offsets and bends are possible but add cost and complexity. In some infill designs, an exterior chimney chase may be the most practical solution, though this affects the home's exterior appearance.

Calgary's chinook winds create additional considerations for wood-burning fireplaces on exposed infill lots. The rapid pressure changes during chinook events can cause downdrafts that push smoke back into the home. A wind-directional chimney cap or damper system helps prevent this, but proper chimney height and termination location are the primary defenses. Your WETT-certified installer will need to consider prevailing wind patterns and the surrounding structures when designing the system.

The installation requires multiple permits and inspections. You'll need a building permit from the City of Calgary for the new chimney penetration, plus the standard gas permit if you're also installing a gas starter or backup system. The work must be completed by a WETT-certified installer to meet insurance requirements and ensure proper installation. A WETT inspection report (\$250-\$400) documents that the installation meets Canadian standards.

Budget \$6,000-\$12,000 for a complete wood-burning fireplace installation in an infill home. The chimney system represents the largest cost component at \$3,000-\$6,000, with the fireplace or wood stove unit adding \$2,000-\$4,000, plus installation labor and finishing work. Infill installations often cost more than standard installations due to access challenges, complex routing, and potentially taller chimney requirements.

Consider whether wood-burning makes sense for your lifestyle. Calgary's long heating season means you'll be burning wood from October through April — six months of regular use requiring wood storage, ash disposal, and annual chimney cleaning. On a narrow infill lot, storing a winter's worth of seasoned firewood can be challenging. Many Calgary homeowners find that a high-efficiency gas fireplace provides similar ambiance with much less maintenance and no storage requirements.

Need help finding a WETT-certified installer to assess your specific infill lot and design a compliant wood-burning system? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local fireplace contractors experienced in infill installations.

Q5

How do I prevent creosote buildup when burning softwood in my Calgary fireplace?

Burning softwood in Calgary fireplaces requires extra vigilance to prevent dangerous creosote buildup, but with proper burning techniques and more frequent chimney maintenance, you can burn softwood safely during our long heating season.

The key to minimizing creosote when burning softwood is maintaining **hot, complete combustion**. Softwoods like pine, spruce, and fir contain more resins and moisture than hardwoods, which creates more smoke and volatile compounds that condense into creosote when they hit the cooler upper sections of your chimney. In Calgary's extreme cold, this condensation happens even faster because the temperature differential between your hot flue gases and the -25°C outdoor air is so dramatic.

Start every fire with small, dry kindling to establish a hot fire quickly, then add larger softwood pieces gradually. Never load your firebox completely full of softwood — this smothers the fire and creates the cool, smoky combustion that produces heavy creosote deposits. Keep your damper fully open until you have a strong draft established, and maintain good airflow throughout the burn. A properly burning softwood fire should have bright, active flames with minimal smoke visible from your chimney.

Seasoning is absolutely critical with softwood — it must be split and dried for at least 12-18 months to reach the 15-20% moisture content needed for clean burning. Freshly cut or inadequately seasoned softwood produces excessive smoke and creosote regardless of your burning technique. Store your wood in a covered but ventilated area where Calgary's dry chinook winds can help the seasoning process.

Calgary's chinook winds create additional creosote challenges because the rapid temperature and pressure changes can cause downdrafts that push creosote-laden smoke back into your home. Install a wind-directional

chimney cap to minimize backdrafting during chinook events, and never burn softwood during severe weather when draft conditions are unpredictable.

Increase your chimney cleaning frequency significantly when burning primarily softwood — plan on professional chimney sweeping twice per season rather than the standard annual cleaning recommended for hardwood burning. Calgary's 6-month heating season means your fireplace accumulates more operating hours than fireplaces in milder climates, and softwood accelerates creosote accumulation. A WETT-certified chimney sweep will remove creosote deposits and inspect for any glazed creosote that requires special removal techniques.

Consider mixing your fuel — burn softwood for quick heat and easy ignition, but add hardwood pieces like birch or maple (available from Calgary-area suppliers) for longer, hotter burns that help burn off light creosote deposits. This combination approach gives you the convenience of softwood with some of the cleaning benefits of hardwood.

Install and maintain proper carbon monoxide detectors throughout your home, as creosote buildup can restrict chimney draft and cause dangerous CO accumulation. Test detectors monthly and replace batteries during the spring and fall time changes.

Never attempt to burn out creosote deposits by creating an extremely hot fire — this can cause a dangerous chimney fire that may crack your chimney liner or damage masonry joints. If you notice white staining on your chimney exterior, strong odors, or reduced draft, stop using the fireplace immediately and have a WETT-certified professional inspect your chimney system.

Need help finding a WETT-certified chimney sweep or fireplace professional? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified contractors who understand Calgary's unique burning conditions and chimney maintenance requirements.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Ardco Construction
- Onsite Contracting and Electrical Services
- G.D.K Drywall LTD.
- Upper Cut Landscaping LTD

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How much does annual chimney sweeping cost for a wood fireplace in Calgary?

Annual chimney sweeping for a wood-burning fireplace in Calgary typically costs \$200-\$400, with most homeowners paying around \$275-\$325 for a standard cleaning and basic inspection.

The cost varies based on several factors specific to your chimney system. A straightforward cleaning of a single-flue masonry chimney with easy roof access runs \$200-\$275. More complex jobs increase the price: multi-story homes with steep roofs cost \$300-\$400, stainless steel chimney systems may require specialized brushes adding \$50-\$75, and chimneys that haven't been cleaned in multiple years with heavy creosote buildup can reach \$350-\$450 due to the extra time and effort required.

Calgary's climate makes annual sweeping absolutely essential rather than optional maintenance. During Calgary's long heating season from October through April, wood-burning fireplaces accumulate significantly more operating hours than fireplaces in milder climates. A fireplace used regularly throughout Calgary's six-month winter can deposit 1/8 to 1/4 inch of creosote in the chimney — enough to create a serious fire hazard. Additionally, Calgary's extreme temperature swings during chinook events cause creosote to harden and become more difficult to remove, making annual cleaning critical for both safety and efficiency.

Most Calgary chimney sweeps include a basic Level 1 inspection with the cleaning service. This covers checking for obvious damage, blockages, and creosote buildup. However, if you need a more comprehensive Level 2 inspection (recommended every few years or before selling your home), expect to pay an additional \$150-\$250. A **WETT inspection**, which many Alberta insurance companies require for wood-burning appliances, costs \$250-\$400 and is separate from routine sweeping.

The best time to schedule chimney sweeping in Calgary is late spring or early summer after the heating season ends. This allows any moisture from the cleaning process to dry completely before fall, and you'll avoid the rush when everyone remembers they need service in September. Many sweeps offer slight discounts for off-season scheduling.

Warning signs that you need immediate cleaning include white staining on the exterior chimney (efflorescence from moisture), rust on the damper or firebox, strong odors from the fireplace during humid weather, or animals or birds in the chimney. Never burn wood in a fireplace with heavy creosote buildup — it can ignite and cause a dangerous chimney fire.

When hiring a chimney sweep, verify they carry WCB Alberta coverage and liability insurance. Ask if they're WETT-certified, which isn't legally required but demonstrates specialized knowledge of wood-burning systems. A professional sweep should provide a written report of their findings and recommendations for any needed repairs.

Need help finding a qualified chimney sweep? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who specialize in wood-burning fireplace maintenance and understand Calgary's unique climate challenges.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- UR COWRY CABINETS
- Ardco Construction
- Radon Lab
- Amar Homes Inc

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Will my Calgary home insurance cover a wood-burning fireplace without WETT inspection?

Most Calgary home insurance companies will NOT provide coverage for wood-burning fireplaces without a WETT inspection report, and some may cancel your policy entirely if they discover an uninspected wood-burning appliance during a claim.

While WETT (Wood Energy Technology Transfer) certification isn't technically mandatory under the Alberta Building Code, it has become the practical standard that Alberta insurance companies rely on to verify that wood-burning installations meet Canadian safety standards. Insurance companies view uninspected wood-burning appliances as unacceptable fire risks, especially given that wood stoves and fireplaces are involved in roughly 25% of residential structure fires in Canada.

The insurance risk is significant for Calgary homeowners. If you have an existing wood-burning fireplace or stove that's never been WETT-inspected, your insurance company may deny coverage for any fire-related claim — even if the fire wasn't caused by the fireplace. Some insurers will cancel your entire policy upon discovering an uninspected wood-burning appliance during a routine claim investigation or policy renewal inspection. This leaves you completely uninsured, which violates most mortgage agreements and creates enormous personal liability exposure.

Calgary's extreme climate makes WETT inspection even more critical. The city's long heating season means wood-burning appliances accumulate heavy use from October through April — six months of regular operation that accelerates creosote buildup and increases fire risk. Chinook wind events create unique draft challenges that can cause backdrafting and improper combustion if the installation doesn't meet proper clearance and venting standards. A WETT-certified technician understands these Calgary-specific conditions and can identify problems that a general home inspector might miss.

Getting a WETT inspection costs \$250-\$400 in Calgary — a small price compared to losing your entire insurance coverage. The inspection covers the appliance installation, chimney condition, clearances to combustible materials, and overall compliance with Canadian standards. If problems are found, you'll get a detailed report explaining what needs repair or modification to meet safety standards. Many insurance companies require re-inspection every few years for older installations.

For new wood-burning installations, hire a WETT-certified installer from the start. This ensures the work meets the highest Canadian standards and provides the documentation your insurance company needs. The installer will provide a WETT compliance certificate upon completion, which satisfies most insurance requirements without needing a separate inspection.

If you're buying a Calgary home with an existing wood-burning fireplace, make the sale conditional on a satisfactory WETT inspection — both for safety and insurance coverage. Don't assume that because a fireplace "looks fine" or was installed by a contractor that it meets current standards or will satisfy your insurance company.

Need help finding a WETT-certified fireplace professional? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified installers and inspectors through the Calgary Construction Network.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Venkor Group Inc
- G.D.K Drywall LTD.
- Calgary Garage Builders Ltd
- Besademolition

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Q8

How much does firewood cost per cord in Calgary?

Firewood in Calgary typically costs \$200-\$400 per full cord delivered, with seasoned hardwood at the higher end and mixed or softwood at the lower end. Prices fluctuate seasonally, peaking in October-November when demand surges before winter, and dropping in spring when homeowners stop burning.

Seasoned hardwood (birch, ash, maple) burns hottest and longest, making it the premium choice for Calgary's long heating season. Expect to pay \$300-\$400 per cord delivered. **Mixed wood** (combination of hardwood and softwood) runs \$250-\$350 per cord and provides good value for most homeowners. **Softwood** (pine, spruce, poplar) costs \$200-\$300 per cord but burns faster, requiring more frequent loading — though it's excellent for kindling and shoulder season burning.

A full cord measures 4 feet high × 4 feet deep × 8 feet long (128 cubic feet of stacked wood). Many Calgary suppliers sell "face cords" or "bush cords" that are only 16 inches deep rather than 48 inches — these contain roughly one-third the wood of a full cord but are often priced deceptively close to full cord prices. Always clarify the actual dimensions and calculate the cost per cubic foot to compare suppliers fairly.

Seasoning is critical in Calgary's climate. Properly seasoned firewood has 15-20% moisture content and has been split and dried for 6-12 months. Green or wet wood burns poorly, creates excessive creosote buildup in your chimney, and produces far less heat. Many Calgary suppliers sell "seasoned" wood that's actually still green — invest in a moisture meter (\$20-\$30) to test wood before accepting delivery.

Delivery costs add \$50-\$100 depending on distance from the supplier and whether they stack the wood. Rural properties around Calgary (Cochrane, Bragg Creek, Priddis) often pay higher delivery fees. Some suppliers offer discounts for early season orders placed in spring or summer when demand is low.

Storage considerations are important given Calgary's weather extremes. Stack firewood off the ground on pallets or treated lumber, with the top covered but sides open for air circulation. A full cord requires roughly 200 square feet of storage space. Many Calgary homeowners store 2-3 cords to avoid mid-winter delivery challenges during severe cold snaps.

For EPA-certified wood stoves and high-efficiency fireplaces, burning only seasoned hardwood maximizes heat output and minimizes maintenance. A typical Calgary home with a wood stove as supplemental heating burns 2-4 cords per winter, depending on the home's size, insulation, and how often the stove runs during the October-to-April heating season.

WETT-certified technicians recommend having your chimney inspected annually when burning wood regularly, as Calgary's extreme temperature swings and chinook events can accelerate creosote buildup and chimney deterioration. Factor chimney cleaning (\$200-\$300 annually) into your total wood heating costs.

Need help finding a fireplace installer for a new wood stove or insert? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with WETT-certified professionals for free estimates on your project.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Allure Residential & Commercial inc
- Besademolition
- Mayken Hazmat Solutions LTD
- UR COWRY CABINETS

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What hearth pad size do I need for a wood stove under the Alberta Building Code?

Wood stove hearth pads in Alberta must extend at least 18 inches (457mm) in front of the stove door and 8 inches (203mm) on all other sides under the Alberta Building Code, but your specific stove's installation manual may require larger dimensions that take precedence.

The Alberta Building Code sets minimum hearth protection requirements, but manufacturers often specify larger clearances based on their stove's heat output and design. Always follow whichever requirement is larger. For most wood stoves installed in Calgary homes, you'll need a hearth pad that extends **18 inches minimum in front of the loading door** to protect flooring from sparks and embers when loading wood, and **8 inches minimum on the sides and back** to protect from radiant heat.

Hearth pad materials must be non-combustible and rated for the thermal protection required by your stove. Common options include natural stone (slate, granite, marble), ceramic or porcelain tile over cement board, or manufactured hearth boards. The pad must also provide adequate thermal protection underneath — typically cement board or other approved thermal barrier between the stove and combustible flooring. Many Calgary homeowners choose natural stone like slate or granite for durability and appearance, especially given our long heating season where the stove sees heavy use from October through April.

Clearances to combustible walls are separate from hearth requirements and vary significantly by stove model and installation method. Most freestanding wood stoves require 36 inches from combustible walls unless you install approved heat shields that can reduce this to 12-18 inches. Corner installations have different requirements, and some stoves are designed for closer clearances with built-in heat shields.

WETT certification is essential for wood stove installation in Calgary. While not legally mandatory under the Alberta Building Code, most Alberta insurance companies require a WETT inspection report, and WETT-certified installers ensure your hearth pad meets both code minimums and manufacturer specifications. A WETT inspection costs \$250-\$400 in Calgary and provides documentation that your installation meets the highest Canadian safety standards.

Installation requires a building permit from the City of Calgary for new chimney penetrations and structural modifications. The hearth pad installation itself may require inspection to verify proper thermal protection and clearances before the stove is connected.

Given Calgary's extreme winter temperatures and the likelihood your wood stove will see heavy use during -25°C to -35°C cold snaps, invest in a quality hearth pad that exceeds minimum requirements. Proper clearances aren't just

code compliance — they're fire prevention in a home where the stove may run continuously during week-long cold spells.

Need help finding a WETT-certified wood stove installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified professionals who understand Alberta Building Code requirements and manufacturer specifications for safe hearth pad installation.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Mr & Mrs Paintastic Inc
- Makki Abatement
- PLATINUM Pool & Spa Services Ltd
- Onsite Contracting and Electrical Services

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How much does a pellet stove cost installed in Calgary compared to a wood stove?

Pellet stoves typically cost \$4,000-\$7,000 installed in Calgary, while wood stoves range \$4,000-\$8,000 installed. The appliance costs are similar, but installation requirements and long-term operating costs differ significantly.

Pellet Stove Costs and Requirements

Pellet stoves cost \$2,000-\$4,000 for the unit itself, with brands like Harman, Quadra-Fire, and Enviro popular in the Calgary market. Installation adds \$2,000-\$3,000, which includes the venting system (3-inch or 4-inch pellet vent pipe), electrical connection for the auger and blower fans, and labour. Unlike wood stoves, pellet stoves require electricity to operate — the auger feeds pellets automatically and fans circulate heated air. This means they won't provide heat during Calgary's winter power outages, which can be a significant drawback when temperatures drop to -30°C.

The venting system for pellet stoves is simpler and less expensive than wood stoves. Pellet vent pipe can terminate horizontally through a wall or vertically through the roof, and the smaller diameter (3-4 inches versus 6-8 inches for wood stoves) means lower material and labour costs. However, you'll still need a building permit for new roof penetrations and a WETT inspection for insurance compliance, adding \$400-\$600 to the project cost.

Wood Stove Costs and Advantages

EPA-certified wood stoves cost \$2,500-\$5,000 for quality units from manufacturers like Napoleon, Osburn, and Pacific Energy. The major cost difference comes in the chimney system — wood stoves require Class A insulated stainless steel chimney pipe (6-8 inch diameter) that costs \$2,000-\$4,000 for a complete system from basement to roof cap. This is significantly more expensive than pellet vent pipe.

Wood stoves provide heat without electricity, making them valuable backup heating during Calgary's winter storms. They also burn a renewable fuel source that's often less expensive than pellets in Alberta. However, they require more hands-on operation — loading wood, managing the fire, and removing ash regularly.

Fuel Costs and Availability in Calgary

Pellet costs in Calgary run approximately \$300-\$400 per ton, with most homes using 3-5 tons per heating season depending on usage patterns. Quality pellets can be harder to source during peak winter months, and you need dry storage space for bulk pellet delivery. Wood costs vary widely — \$200-\$350 per cord for seasoned hardwood delivered, with most Calgary homes using 3-6 cords per season. Both require significant storage space, but wood can often be sourced locally from tree removal services or purchased in smaller quantities as needed.

Alberta Building Code and Permits

Both pellet and wood stoves require the same permitting process in Calgary. You'll need a building permit for new chimney penetrations, and WETT certification is essential for insurance compliance. The installation must be done by a WETT-certified technician, and clearances to combustible materials are strictly regulated under the Alberta Building Code. Safety Codes Officer inspection is required for both types.

Climate Considerations for Calgary

Calgary's chinook winds affect both appliances, but wood stoves are more susceptible to draft reversals during rapid pressure changes. Both need annual chimney cleaning and inspection after a full heating season of use. The extreme cold and long heating season (October through April) means these units will see heavy use, making build quality and reliability crucial factors in your decision.

Need help finding a WETT-certified installer for your pellet or wood stove project? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local specialists through the Calgary Construction Network.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- The Original Workshop
- Royland Stucco
- Ardco Construction
- Jk Stucco

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Q11

Is a catalytic or non-catalytic wood stove better for Calgary homes?

For Calgary homes, non-catalytic wood stoves are generally the better choice due to their simpler operation, lower maintenance requirements, and better performance in Calgary's extreme cold conditions where you need reliable, consistent heat output.

Non-catalytic wood stoves burn wood through secondary combustion — they inject preheated air above the fire to burn off smoke and gases that would otherwise escape up the chimney. This design achieves 70-75% efficiency without requiring a catalytic combustor component. The key advantages for Calgary homeowners include immediate heat output when you start the fire (crucial when it's -30°C outside), simpler operation with no catalyst to monitor or maintain, and consistent performance throughout the long heating season from October through April. Non-catalytic stoves also handle the rapid temperature swings from chinook winds better since there's no catalyst that can be damaged by thermal shock.

Catalytic wood stoves use a ceramic honeycomb catalyst coated with platinum or palladium to burn smoke and gases at lower temperatures, achieving slightly higher efficiency (75-80%) and longer burn times. However, the catalyst requires careful temperature management — it needs to reach 500-600°F to activate but can be damaged by overheating above 1,800°F. During Calgary's extreme cold snaps, you often need maximum heat output quickly, which can stress the catalyst. The catalyst also requires annual inspection and replacement every 3-5 years at \$200-\$400, adding to operating costs.

Calgary's climate creates specific challenges that favor non-catalytic designs. During those brutal January cold snaps when temperatures drop to -35°C for days, you need a stove that fires up quickly and delivers maximum heat immediately — non-catalytic stoves excel here. Chinook winds can cause rapid pressure changes that affect chimney draft, and non-catalytic stoves are less sensitive to draft variations than catalytic models. The long heating season means your wood stove will accumulate 800-1,000+ operating hours annually, making the simpler, more robust non-catalytic design advantageous for reliability.

For WETT certification and insurance compliance, both types are acceptable, but the WETT-certified installer will need to properly size the chimney system regardless of stove type. A Class A insulated stainless steel chimney system runs \$2,000-\$4,000 in Calgary, and proper installation requires a building permit for the roof penetration. Popular non-catalytic brands available through Calgary dealers include Regency, Pacific Energy, and Osburn, with complete installations typically running \$5,000-\$10,000 including the chimney system.

The bottom line for Calgary homeowners: Unless you're an experienced wood burner who enjoys the technical aspects of catalyst management and wants to squeeze out every bit of efficiency, a quality non-catalytic wood stove will serve you better in Calgary's demanding climate. The simpler operation, immediate heat output, and lower maintenance requirements make non-catalytic the practical choice for most Calgary homes.

Need help finding a WETT-certified installer for your wood stove project? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who understand Calgary's specific installation requirements and climate challenges.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- G.D.K Drywall LTD.
- Radon Lab
- Jk Stucco
- UR COWRY CABINETS

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Q12

Can I install a wood stove in a Calgary condo or townhome?

Installing a wood stove in a Calgary condo is extremely difficult and often impossible, while townhomes may allow it depending on your condo board rules, building structure, and chimney access.

The biggest challenge is that **wood stoves require a full chimney system** — either an existing masonry chimney or a new Class A insulated stainless steel chimney that penetrates through the roof. In condos, you typically don't own the roof or exterior walls, and condo boards rarely approve major structural modifications like new chimney penetrations. Even if you have an existing fireplace with a chimney, most condo fireplaces share chimney systems or have undersized flues that cannot safely accommodate a wood stove.

Townhomes offer better possibilities if you own the roof and exterior walls of your unit. You'll need to check your condo corporation's bylaws and architectural guidelines — some allow chimney installations while others prohibit any exterior modifications. If permitted, you'll need a building permit from the City of Calgary for the new chimney penetration, plus the installation must be done by a WETT-certified installer to meet insurance requirements.

Calgary's climate considerations make wood stoves appealing for their heating capacity and power outage reliability, but the practical challenges in multi-unit housing are significant. A wood stove installation typically costs \$5,000-\$12,000 including the chimney system, which represents a major investment that you cannot take with you if you move.

Better alternatives for condos and townhomes include gas fireplaces (if natural gas is available to your unit) or electric fireplaces. A direct-vent gas fireplace can vent horizontally through an exterior wall without requiring roof penetration, making it much more feasible for condo installation. Electric fireplaces require no venting at all and can provide zone heating for individual rooms, though at higher operating costs than wood or gas.

If you're determined to pursue wood stove installation, start by reviewing your condo documents and contacting your property management company. You'll need written approval before proceeding with any permits or contractor consultations. For townhomes with approval potential, consult with a WETT-certified installer who can assess your specific unit's structural requirements and chimney routing options.

Need help finding a WETT-certified fireplace installer to assess your specific situation? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with professionals experienced in multi-unit housing installations through the Calgary Construction Network.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Jk Stucco
- Turnbull masonry
- Upper Cut Landscaping LTD
- Calgary Garage Builders Ltd

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How much does it cost to restore an original masonry fireplace in an older Calgary home?

Restoring an original masonry fireplace in an older Calgary home typically costs \$3,000-\$8,000 for a complete restoration, including chimney relining, tuckpointing, damper replacement, and firebox repair. The wide range depends on the extent of damage from Calgary's harsh freeze-thaw cycles and whether you're restoring it for wood-burning use or converting to gas.

Masonry fireplaces in Calgary's older neighborhoods — Hillhurst, Kensington, Mount Pleasant, Inglewood — face unique challenges from chinook winds and extreme temperature swings. These rapid weather changes cause masonry to expand and contract repeatedly, accelerating mortar deterioration and creating cracks in chimney crowns, flue liners, and firebox walls. A typical restoration starts with a thorough inspection to assess the chimney liner condition, damper functionality, firebox integrity, and overall structural soundness.

The most critical component is chimney relining, which costs \$1,500-\$3,500 in Calgary. Most pre-1980 masonry chimneys have clay tile liners that crack over time, especially from chinook thermal stress. A new stainless steel liner is essential for safety — cracked liners allow carbon monoxide and combustion gases to seep into your home's walls and living spaces. This work requires a building permit and Safety Codes Officer inspection.

Tuckpointing and masonry repair typically runs \$15-\$30 per square foot, depending on the extent of mortar joint deterioration. Calgary's freeze-thaw cycles are particularly hard on mortar — water penetrates hairline cracks, freezes, expands, and progressively widens the gaps. Firebox repair, including new firebrick and refractory mortar, adds \$800-\$1,500. Damper replacement costs \$400-\$800 — many original dampers are warped or rusted from decades of moisture exposure.

If you're planning to burn wood, you'll need WETT certification after restoration. A WETT-certified installer must verify that the restored fireplace meets current Canadian safety standards, including proper clearances, adequate combustion air, and chimney draft performance. The WETT inspection costs \$250-\$400 but is required by most Alberta home insurance companies. Many homeowners discover during restoration that converting to a gas insert (\$2,500-\$5,500 total) provides better efficiency and lower maintenance than restoring for wood-burning use.

Additional costs include chimney crown repair (\$500-\$1,500), new chimney cap and spark arrestor (\$200-\$500), and exterior masonry cleaning or repointing (\$1,000-\$2,500). Factor in potential surprises — older Calgary homes sometimes reveal structural issues, asbestos-containing materials, or code violations that weren't apparent during initial inspection. Budget an extra 15-20% contingency for unexpected discoveries.

The restoration process typically takes 2-4 weeks, weather permitting. Masonry work is best done during Calgary's warmer months (May through September) when mortar cures properly and workers can access exterior chimney components safely. Interior firebox restoration can be done year-round.

Before starting restoration, verify that your homeowner's insurance covers the work and any potential damage. Some insurers require notification before major fireplace restoration projects. Also confirm that your contractor carries WCB Alberta coverage — masonry restoration involves significant safety risks from working at height and handling heavy materials.

Need help finding a qualified masonry restoration contractor? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with experienced professionals who understand the unique challenges of restoring heritage fireplaces in Calgary's climate. Get matched with a fireplace professional for a free assessment of your restoration project.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Dealtwith.
- Wise Abatement
- Keystone Exteriors
- Calgary Custom Concepts

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Q14

What is the cost of a chimney system for a new wood stove in a Calgary home?

A complete chimney system for a new wood stove in Calgary typically costs \$2,000-\$5,000, representing roughly half the total project cost when you factor in the stove, installation labor, permits, and finishing work.

The chimney system is the most expensive component of any wood-burning installation because it requires a Class A insulated stainless steel chimney that penetrates your roof and extends above the roofline. Unlike gas fireplaces that can vent horizontally through a wall, wood stoves need a full vertical chimney system to create proper draft and safely exhaust combustion gases and creosote.

Class A insulated chimney pipe forms the core of the system, running from your stove through the ceiling, attic space, and roof. This double-wall or triple-wall stainless steel pipe costs \$40-\$80 per linear foot depending on diameter (6-inch or 8-inch) and insulation rating. A typical Calgary home with 8-foot ceilings plus attic space needs 15-20 feet of chimney pipe, so expect \$600-\$1,600 just for the pipe itself. The chimney must extend at least 3 feet above the roof penetration point and 2 feet above any roof surface within 10 feet — Calgary's building code requirements that often add extra pipe length.

Support components and roof penetration materials add significant cost. You'll need a ceiling support box (\$150-\$300), roof flashing and storm collar (\$100-\$200), chimney cap (\$150-\$400), and often a roof brace or guy-wire system for tall installations (\$200-\$500). The roof penetration work requires careful flashing to prevent leaks during Calgary's freeze-thaw cycles and chinook temperature swings that can cause rapid expansion and contraction.

Installation labor for the chimney system runs \$1,000-\$2,500 depending on complexity. Single-story homes with straightforward roof access cost less than two-story homes or complex rooflines. WETT-certified installers charge premium rates because they carry specialized insurance and certification, but this expertise is essential for safe installation and insurance compliance. Most Alberta home insurance companies require WETT certification for wood-burning appliances.

Building permits from the City of Calgary are required for new chimney penetrations, adding \$150-\$300 to your project cost. The permit process ensures your installation meets Alberta Building Code requirements for clearances, structural support, and fire safety. A Safety Codes Officer inspects the completed work before you can operate the stove.

Calgary-specific considerations can increase chimney costs. Chinook winds create unique draft challenges that may require a wind-directional chimney cap (\$300-\$600) to prevent backdrafting when rapid pressure changes occur. Homes in areas with frequent chinooks may also need additional chimney bracing to handle the thermal stress of rapid temperature swings. The long Calgary heating season — October through April — means your chimney system will see heavy use and needs robust construction.

Total project costs for a complete wood stove installation typically range \$5,000-\$12,000, with the chimney system representing 40-50% of that investment. A basic EPA-certified wood stove costs \$1,500-\$3,500, plus \$2,000-\$5,000 for the chimney system, \$1,000-\$2,500 for installation labor, and \$500-\$1,500 for permits, hearth pad, and finishing work.

For Calgary homeowners, wood stoves make most sense on acreages or rural properties where you have access to affordable firewood and want the authentic fire experience plus heating capability during power outages. The high upfront chimney cost is offset by decades of use and the satisfaction of heating with renewable local wood

during Alberta's long winters.

Need help finding a WETT-certified wood stove installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who specialize in wood-burning installations and understand Calgary's unique climate challenges.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- WestAim Construction Ltd.
- Jk Stucco
- Turnbull masonry
- Royland Stucco

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Q15

Is it legal to burn wood in a fireplace in Calgary?

Yes, it is legal to burn wood in fireplaces in Calgary, but there are important restrictions and requirements you need to follow under both city bylaws and provincial regulations.

Calgary allows wood burning in properly installed and maintained wood-burning fireplaces, wood stoves, and outdoor fire pits, but the city has specific rules to manage air quality and fire safety. **Fire bans are issued during high fire danger periods** — typically during hot, dry summer conditions when wildfire risk is elevated. During these bans, ALL outdoor burning is prohibited, including fire pits, but indoor wood-burning fireplaces and stoves can still be used. Fire ban status changes based on weather conditions, so check the City of Calgary website or call 311 before lighting any outdoor fires.

Indoor wood-burning appliances must meet Alberta Building Code requirements and be installed by a WETT-certified technician. WETT (Wood Energy Technology Transfer) certification ensures the installation meets Canadian safety standards for clearances, chimney systems, and ventilation. While not legally mandatory under provincial code, WETT certification is practically essential because most Alberta home insurance companies require a WETT inspection report for coverage on homes with wood-burning appliances. A WETT inspection in Calgary costs \$250-\$400 and provides documentation that your wood-burning system is safe and compliant.

Calgary's climate actually makes wood burning more practical than in many Canadian cities. The long heating season from October through April means you'll get substantial use from a wood-burning fireplace or stove. However, chinook winds create unique challenges — these rapid temperature swings can cause chimney draft reversal, leading to smoke backdrafting into your home. Proper chimney caps and dampers help prevent this issue. Calgary's extreme cold also means your wood-burning appliance will work harder and accumulate more operating hours, requiring annual chimney cleaning and inspection to prevent dangerous creosote buildup.

For new installations, you'll need building permits for chimney penetrations through the roof, and the chimney system (Class A insulated stainless steel or masonry) represents the biggest cost component at \$2,000-\$5,000. EPA-certified wood stoves operate at 70-80% efficiency compared to just 10-15% for traditional open masonry fireplaces, making them much more effective for supplemental heating during Calgary's brutal winter cold snaps.

Always burn only seasoned hardwood with moisture content below 20% — wet or green wood creates excessive smoke and creosote, violating air quality bylaws and creating fire hazards. Never burn treated lumber, painted wood, or garbage, which releases toxic fumes and is prohibited under Calgary's waste management bylaws.

Need help finding a WETT-certified installer for a wood-burning fireplace or stove? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified professionals through the Calgary Construction Network.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Makki Abatement
- Turnbull masonry
- New Earth Waste Services Ltd
- Premium Built Structures

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Do I need a building permit for a wood stove chimney in Calgary?

Yes, you need a building permit from the City of Calgary for any new chimney installation or structural modifications to accommodate a wood stove. This is required under the Alberta Building Code because a chimney creates a new penetration through your roof structure and involves fire safety considerations.

Building permits are required for several aspects of wood stove installation: new chimney penetrations through the roof or wall, structural modifications to support the stove or chimney system, and any changes to framing or load-bearing elements. The permit ensures your installation meets Alberta Building Code requirements for clearances, structural integrity, and fire safety. You'll need to submit plans showing the stove location, chimney routing, clearances to combustibles, and structural details.

Beyond the building permit, wood stove installation in Calgary requires additional certifications and inspections. The installer must be WETT-certified (Wood Energy Technology Transfer), which is the Canadian standard for wood-burning appliance installation. While not legally mandatory under the Alberta Building Code, WETT certification is practically essential because most Alberta home insurance companies require a WETT inspection report for coverage. A Safety Codes Officer will also inspect the completed installation to verify compliance with the Alberta Building Code.

Calgary's climate creates specific considerations for wood stove chimneys. The city's chinook winds can cause rapid temperature swings that stress masonry chimneys and affect draft patterns. Your chimney system needs proper wind-directional caps and adequate height to ensure consistent draft during Calgary's variable weather conditions. The extreme cold also means your chimney will see heavy use during the six-month heating season from October through April.

The permit process typically takes 2-4 weeks and costs \$200-\$400 depending on project complexity. Submit your application to City of Calgary Planning & Development with detailed plans, structural calculations if required, and manufacturer specifications for your stove and chimney system. The building permit covers the structural and safety aspects, while the WETT certification (\$250-\$400) provides documentation that the installation meets the highest Canadian standard for wood-burning appliances.

Professional installation is mandatory for wood stove and chimney work. This isn't a DIY project — improper installation can cause house fires, carbon monoxide poisoning, or structural damage. A WETT-certified installer handles the permit application, ensures code compliance, and provides the inspection documentation your insurance company requires. The complete installation typically costs \$5,000-\$12,000 including the stove, Class A insulated chimney system, permits, and professional installation.

Need help finding a WETT-certified wood stove installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified professionals who handle the entire permit and installation process.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- PLATINUM Pool & Spa Services Ltd
- Calgary Garage Builders Ltd
- Besademolition
- Turnbull masonry

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Q17

How much creosote buildup is normal in a Calgary chimney after one winter?

Creosote buildup in Calgary chimneys varies significantly based on wood type, burning practices, and chimney draft, but expect 1/8" to 1/4" of buildup after a full winter of regular use — enough to require professional cleaning before the next heating season.

The amount of creosote accumulation depends heavily on how you burn. **Burning seasoned hardwood at high temperatures produces minimal creosote** — perhaps just a light coating that looks like black paint on the chimney walls. **Burning green or wet wood, softwoods like pine, or maintaining low smoldering fires creates heavy, tar-like creosote deposits** that can accumulate to 1/2" or more in a single season. This thick, glazed creosote is extremely flammable and dangerous.

Calgary's extreme cold actually increases creosote formation because the temperature differential between hot flue gases and the frigid outdoor air causes more condensation inside the chimney. When outdoor temperatures drop to -25°C to -35°C during Calgary's winter cold snaps, flue gases cool rapidly as they rise through the chimney, depositing more creosote on the walls than in milder climates. Additionally, **chinook wind events create unique challenges** — the rapid pressure changes can affect chimney draft and cause incomplete combustion, leading to more creosote production during these weather events.

Professional chimney sweeping is essential after Calgary's long heating season. Most Calgary homes with wood-burning fireplaces or stoves need annual cleaning, and some heavy users require cleaning twice per season. A WETT-certified chimney sweep will remove all creosote deposits, inspect the chimney liner for damage, and check for proper draft and clearances. **Expect to pay \$200-\$400 for professional chimney cleaning in Calgary.**

Warning signs of dangerous creosote buildup include: white staining on the exterior chimney (efflorescence from moisture), strong odors during humid weather, poor draft or smoke entering the room, and rust on the damper or firebox. **Never attempt to burn out creosote deposits** — this can cause a chimney fire that reaches temperatures over 2,000°F and can crack chimney liners or ignite nearby combustibles.

To minimize creosote formation: burn only seasoned hardwood with moisture content below 20%, maintain hot fires rather than smoldering, ensure adequate combustion air supply, and have your chimney inspected annually.

Modern EPA-certified wood stoves produce significantly less creosote than older stoves or open masonry fireplaces because they burn more completely and efficiently.

Need help finding a WETT-certified chimney sweep? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified professionals who understand Calgary's specific climate challenges and follow proper safety protocols for creosote removal and chimney maintenance.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Onsite Contracting and Electrical Services
- Mr & Mrs Paintastic Inc
- Allure Residential & Commercial inc
- Turnbull masonry

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Q18

Can I use a wood-burning fireplace during a Calgary air quality advisory?

No, you should not use a wood-burning fireplace during an air quality advisory in Calgary. The City of Calgary and Alberta Environment specifically ask residents to avoid burning wood during poor air quality events to

prevent worsening conditions for everyone in the community.

During air quality advisories — which typically occur during summer wildfire season or winter temperature inversions — particulate matter (PM2.5) levels are already elevated to unhealthy levels. Wood-burning fireplaces and stoves release additional fine particulates that contribute directly to the problem. Even EPA-certified wood stoves, which burn much cleaner than traditional fireplaces, still produce measurable emissions that compound existing air quality issues.

Calgary's unique geography makes air quality advisories particularly serious. The city sits in a natural bowl between the Bow River valley and surrounding hills, which can trap pollutants during temperature inversions — especially common during winter high-pressure systems. When chinook winds aren't moving air masses through the region, smoke and particulates can linger for days. Adding wood smoke from residential fireplaces during these events creates a cumulative effect that impacts respiratory health across the entire metropolitan area.

Winter air quality advisories in Calgary often coincide with the coldest weather when homeowners most want to use their fireplaces for supplemental heating. This creates a frustrating situation, but it's precisely when wood smoke has the greatest impact — cold, still air prevents dispersion, and people spend more time indoors breathing concentrated pollutants. If you rely on a wood-burning fireplace for primary heating, consider having a backup heating plan during air quality events.

Gas fireplaces are not restricted during air quality advisories because they burn cleanly with sealed combustion systems that don't contribute to outdoor air pollution. Direct-vent gas fireplaces draw combustion air from outside and exhaust combustion products directly outside through a sealed system, making them air-quality neutral. This is one of the key advantages of gas over wood in Calgary's urban environment.

Check Environment and Climate Change Canada's Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) or the City of Calgary's website for current air quality status. The AQHI runs from 1-10+, with advisories typically issued at level 7 or higher. During these periods, vulnerable populations including children, seniors, and people with respiratory conditions should limit outdoor activities, and everyone should avoid adding to air pollution sources.

If you're considering a fireplace upgrade, this is one reason why gas fireplaces have become the dominant choice in Calgary. With ATCO Gas readily available and current rates around \$3.50-\$5.00 per GJ, a gas fireplace provides reliable supplemental heating without weather or air quality restrictions. You can enjoy your fireplace every day of Calgary's long winter season without worrying about contributing to community air quality problems.

Need help finding a fireplace installer to convert from wood to gas? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local contractors who specialize in fireplace conversions and gas installations.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Quality count construction Ltd.
- Dealtwith.
- Calgary Custom Concepts
- Wise Abatement

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Can I install a wood-burning fireplace in a new Calgary home?

Yes, you can install a wood-burning fireplace in a new Calgary home, but it requires careful planning, proper permits, and WETT-certified installation. Wood-burning fireplaces are completely legal under the Alberta Building Code, though they involve more complex installation requirements than gas or electric options.

New construction actually offers significant advantages for wood-burning installations because you can plan the chimney system from the foundation up, ensuring optimal placement and structural support. The chimney system — either a full masonry chimney or Class A insulated stainless steel pipe — represents the largest cost component at \$3,000-\$6,000, but integrating it during construction is far more cost-effective than retrofitting later. You'll need building permits from the City of Calgary for the chimney penetration through the roof, and the installation must be done by a WETT-certified installer to meet insurance requirements.

Calgary's extreme climate makes wood-burning fireplaces particularly appealing for their reliability during power outages. When temperatures drop to -30°C and chinook winds cause electrical disruptions, a wood-burning fireplace continues providing heat without any dependence on the electrical grid. Modern EPA-certified wood stoves and high-efficiency fireplaces operate at 70-80% efficiency — dramatically better than traditional open masonry fireplaces at 10-15% efficiency. For new construction, consider a high-efficiency wood-burning insert or zero-clearance fireplace rather than a traditional masonry fireplace.

However, wood-burning installations face unique challenges in Calgary's climate. Chinook winds can cause dramatic pressure changes that reverse natural chimney draft, leading to smoke backdrafting into your home. Your WETT-certified installer should specify a wind-directional chimney cap and proper damper system to prevent this issue. The rapid temperature swings during chinook events also stress masonry chimneys more than in other climates, so if you choose masonry, ensure it's built with high-quality materials and proper expansion joints.

Budget \$5,000-\$12,000 for a complete wood-burning fireplace installation in new construction, including the fireplace unit, chimney system, hearth pad, and finishing work. EPA-certified units from manufacturers like Napoleon, Regency, or Osburn are popular choices in Alberta. The installation requires coordination with your home builder to ensure proper framing, fireproofing, and structural support for the chimney system.

Consider your long-term commitment to wood burning before proceeding. Wood-burning fireplaces require annual chimney sweeping (\$200-\$300), regular ash removal, seasoned firewood sourcing, and more hands-on maintenance than gas alternatives. ATCO Gas is widely available and affordable in Calgary at roughly \$0.50-\$1.00 per hour of operation, making gas fireplaces the more convenient choice for most homeowners.

Need help finding a WETT-certified fireplace installer for your new home? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified professionals who specialize in wood-burning installations and understand Calgary's unique climate requirements.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Allure Residential & Commercial inc
- Keystone Exteriors
- Eshine Cleaning Services
- Alpine Exteriors siding and roofing

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Q20

How much does a wood-burning stove cost to install in Calgary?

A complete wood-burning stove installation in Calgary typically costs \$5,000-\$12,000, with the wide range reflecting whether you need a new chimney system versus connecting to an existing one, plus the stove model and finishing choices.

The **stove itself** represents about 30-40% of your total project cost. Entry-level EPA-certified wood stoves start around \$1,500-\$2,500, while premium models with features like catalytic combustors, large viewing windows, and decorative cast iron can reach \$3,000-\$5,000. Popular brands in Calgary include Napoleon, Regency, Pacific Energy, and Blaze King. These modern EPA-certified stoves operate at 70-80% efficiency — a massive improvement over traditional open fireplaces that waste 85-90% of their heat up the chimney.

The chimney system is typically your largest expense, ranging from \$2,000-\$5,000 depending on height and complexity. If you're installing into an existing masonry chimney in good condition, you'll need a full stainless steel liner (\$1,500-\$2,500) plus connection components. For new installations, you'll need a complete Class A insulated stainless steel chimney system from the stove through the roof, including roof penetration, flashing, storm collar, and chimney cap. Calgary's extreme temperature swings — especially during chinook events where temperatures can jump 30 degrees in hours — put extra stress on chimney systems, making quality materials and proper installation critical.

Professional installation and permits add \$1,500-\$3,000 to your project. Wood stove installation requires a **WETT-certified installer** (Wood Energy Technology Transfer), which is the Canadian standard for wood-burning appliance safety. While not legally mandatory under the Alberta Building Code, WETT certification is practically essential because most Alberta home insurance companies require a WETT inspection report for coverage. The installation also requires a building permit from the City of Calgary for any new roof penetrations, plus inspection by a Safety Codes Officer.

Calgary's climate makes wood stoves particularly valuable during the city's long heating season from October through April. At current firewood prices of \$300-\$450 per full cord, heating costs are competitive with ATCO Gas, especially if you source your own wood from the abundant deadfall in nearby Kananaskis and Bow Valley forests. Wood stoves also provide reliable heat during power outages — a real consideration when winter storms can knock out electricity and outdoor temperatures drop rapidly.

Additional costs to budget for include hearth pad installation (\$300-\$800) if your floor isn't already protected with tile or stone, wall protection if clearances are tight (\$200-\$500), and the chimney cap upgrade to a wind-directional model (\$300-\$600) to prevent backdrafting during Calgary's notorious chinook winds.

Installation timing affects costs slightly — demand peaks in September and October as homeowners prepare for winter, while summer installations may offer modest savings when contractors have more availability.

Need help finding a WETT-certified wood stove installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who understand Calgary's unique climate challenges and Alberta Building Code requirements for a free estimate on your project.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- G.D.K Drywall LTD.
- Durable Decks
- UR COWRY CABINETS
- Calgary Garage Builders Ltd

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Q21

What EPA efficiency rating should I look for in a wood stove for Calgary?

For Calgary's extreme cold and long heating season, look for an EPA-certified wood stove with at least 75% efficiency rating, though 78-85% is ideal for maximizing heat output and minimizing wood consumption during our brutal winters.

Modern EPA-certified wood stoves operate dramatically more efficiently than older units or traditional open fireplaces. The EPA certification program requires stoves to burn cleanly and efficiently, with most quality units now achieving 75-85% efficiency compared to just 10-15% for an open masonry fireplace. In Calgary, where you'll realistically use your wood stove from October through April — six months of regular heating — this efficiency difference translates to substantial savings in firewood costs and much better heat output per cord burned.

Efficiency ratings above 80% represent the top tier of wood stove technology. Brands like Blaze King, Pacific Energy (made in British Columbia), Regency, and Napoleon offer models in this range. These high-efficiency stoves use advanced combustion technology with secondary burn chambers that re-burn smoke and gases, extracting maximum heat from every piece of wood. During Calgary's -25°C to -35°C cold snaps that can last for weeks, a high-efficiency wood stove providing 40,000-80,000 BTU becomes a meaningful supplement to your furnace, reducing your natural gas heating costs even with ATCO Gas rates.

Calgary's chinook winds create unique considerations for wood stove efficiency. The rapid temperature swings from -25°C to +10°C in a matter of hours can affect chimney draft and combustion efficiency. A high-efficiency stove with good draft control and damper systems handles these pressure changes better than cheaper units. Additionally, the thermal stress from chinooks accelerates wear on chimney systems, making the clean-burning characteristics of EPA-certified stoves even more important — less creosote buildup means less maintenance and safer operation.

Installation requires WETT certification and building permits. Any wood stove installation in the Calgary area needs a WETT-certified installer and a building permit for new chimney penetrations. The chimney system — typically a Class A insulated stainless steel chimney — represents \$2,000-\$5,000 of your total \$5,000-\$12,000 project cost. Most Alberta home insurance companies require a WETT inspection report for coverage, and this documentation proves your high-efficiency stove meets Canadian safety standards.

Consider BTU output alongside efficiency ratings. A smaller, super-efficient stove might achieve 85% efficiency but only produce 25,000 BTU, which won't adequately heat a large Calgary home during extreme cold. Balance efficiency with appropriate BTU output for your space — typically 30-50 BTU per square foot for well-insulated homes, more for older homes with poor insulation. A 75% efficient stove producing 60,000 BTU often provides better real-world heating than an 85% efficient unit producing 30,000 BTU.

Annual maintenance becomes critical with Calgary's heavy use season. High-efficiency stoves still require annual chimney cleaning and inspection, especially given our long heating season and chinook-related thermal stress. Budget \$200-\$400 annually for professional cleaning and WETT inspection to maintain efficiency, safety, and insurance compliance.

Need help finding a WETT-certified wood stove installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified professionals who understand both EPA efficiency standards and Calgary's unique climate challenges.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Eshine Cleaning Services
- Upper Cut Landscaping LTD
- Calgary Custom Concepts
- Greenstone landscaping solutions

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What is the best wood to burn in a Calgary fireplace for heat output?

For maximum heat output in Calgary's extreme winter conditions, dense hardwoods like birch, ash, and oak provide the highest BTU content per cord, but birch is your best practical choice since it's readily available from Alberta suppliers and burns efficiently in both open fireplaces and wood stoves.

Birch is the top recommendation for Calgary wood-burning fireplaces. Paper birch and yellow birch are harvested locally in Alberta and provide excellent heat output at 20-24 million BTU per cord when properly seasoned. Birch splits easily, seasons relatively quickly (12-18 months), and produces good coals for sustained heat during those brutal -30°C Calgary nights. The white bark makes it easy to identify, and it's widely available from local firewood suppliers at reasonable prices.

Ash delivers slightly higher BTU content (24-25 million per cord) and is considered one of the premium heating woods in North America. It burns cleanly with minimal smoke and creosote buildup, which is important for Calgary chimneys that already face stress from chinook temperature swings. However, ash is less commonly available in Alberta and typically costs more than birch.

Oak provides the highest heat output at 25-28 million BTU per cord, but it's expensive in Calgary since it must be shipped from eastern Canada. Oak also requires 2-3 years of seasoning time, making it impractical for most Calgary homeowners. Save your money and stick with local Alberta hardwoods.

Avoid softwoods like pine, spruce, and fir for primary heating. While these are abundant and cheap in Alberta, they burn fast, produce less heat (15-18 million BTU per cord), and create more creosote buildup in your chimney. The rapid temperature cycling from chinooks already stresses Calgary chimneys — don't add excessive creosote that increases fire risk.

Seasoning is critical in Calgary's climate. Freshly cut wood contains 40-50% moisture and burns poorly, producing more smoke than heat. Properly seasoned firewood should be 15-20% moisture content. In Calgary's dry climate with chinook winds, split hardwood typically seasons in 12-18 months if stacked properly with good airflow. Always buy seasoned wood or plan ahead if cutting your own.

For Calgary's long heating season (October through April), budget approximately 3-5 cords for a wood stove as primary heat, or 1-2 cords for occasional fireplace use. At current Calgary prices, expect to pay \$200-\$350 per cord for seasoned birch, delivered and stacked.

Remember that any wood-burning installation in Calgary requires a **WETT-certified installer** and most insurance companies require a WETT inspection report. The chimney system is the biggest safety concern — Calgary's freeze-thaw cycles and chinook winds create unique stresses that make annual chimney inspection essential.

Need help finding a WETT-certified fireplace installer for a wood stove or fireplace? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified professionals through the Calgary Construction Network.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- New Earth Waste Services Ltd
- Durable Decks
- Royland Stucco
- Canadian Closet

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Q23

Do I need WETT certification for a wood stove installation in Calgary?

WETT certification is not legally required under the Alberta Building Code, but it's practically essential for wood stove installation in Calgary. Most Alberta home insurance companies require a WETT inspection report for homes with wood-burning appliances, and a WETT-certified installation provides documentation that the work meets the highest Canadian safety standard.

WETT (Wood Energy Technology Transfer) is the Canadian national standard for wood-burning appliance installation and inspection. While the Alberta Building Code sets minimum requirements for wood stove installation, WETT certification goes beyond these minimums and represents best practices developed specifically for Canadian conditions. A WETT-certified technician understands proper clearances, chimney sizing, combustion air requirements, and installation techniques that ensure safe, efficient operation in Calgary's extreme climate.

Your home insurance company will almost certainly require a WETT inspection report when you add a wood stove to your Calgary home. Insurance companies recognize WETT as the gold standard for wood-burning safety, and without this documentation, you may face coverage restrictions or higher premiums. The inspection report must be completed by a WETT-certified technician and covers the entire system — stove installation, chimney condition, clearances to combustibles, and overall compliance with safety standards.

Calgary's unique climate conditions make WETT certification even more valuable. Chinook winds create rapid pressure changes that can cause backdrafting in improperly installed wood stoves, and the extreme cold means your wood stove will see heavy use throughout the six-month heating season. A WETT-certified installer understands how to account for these local conditions, including proper chimney cap selection to prevent wind-driven downdrafts and adequate combustion air supply for efficient burning at altitude.

The installation process requires both municipal permits and WETT certification. You'll need a building permit from the City of Calgary for the chimney penetration through your roof, and the completed installation must pass inspection by a Safety Codes Officer. However, the municipal inspection focuses on basic code compliance, while WETT certification ensures the installation follows industry best practices for long-term safety and performance.

A WETT inspection in Calgary costs \$250-\$400 — a small investment compared to the \$5,000-\$12,000 total cost of a wood stove and chimney system installation. The inspection covers the stove installation, chimney system, clearances, and provides a detailed report documenting compliance. This report satisfies insurance requirements and gives you confidence that your wood stove is installed safely for Calgary's demanding conditions.

Find a WETT-certified installer through the Calgary Construction Network to ensure your wood stove installation meets both Alberta Building Code requirements and insurance company expectations. A properly certified installation protects your family's safety and your home's insurability while ensuring efficient heating performance throughout Calgary's long winter season.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Venkor Group Inc
- Bracha Concrete & Coatings Inc.
- Makki Abatement
- Mr & Mrs Paintastic Inc

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Q24

How much does a masonry fireplace cost to build from scratch in Calgary?

Building a masonry fireplace from scratch in Calgary typically costs \$8,000-\$18,000, with most projects falling in the \$12,000-\$15,000 range. This wide range reflects the complexity of custom masonry work, foundation requirements, and the extensive permitting process required for new fireplace construction.

A masonry fireplace is a major construction project involving multiple trades and permits. The **foundation and footings** alone cost \$2,000-\$4,000, as masonry fireplaces require a dedicated concrete foundation that extends below the frost line — critical in Calgary where frost can penetrate 6-8 feet deep. The **firebox construction** using firebrick and refractory mortar adds \$2,500-\$4,000, while the **chimney system** from the smoke chamber to the crown typically runs \$3,000-\$6,000 depending on height and complexity.

Labor costs fluctuate significantly with Calgary's construction market, which is heavily influenced by oil and gas sector activity. When the energy sector is strong, skilled masons command premium rates, pushing project costs toward the higher end of the range. The **stone or brick veneer** adds substantial cost — natural stone runs \$15-\$35 per square foot installed, while quality brick ranges from \$8-\$18 per square foot. A typical fireplace face requires 80-120 square feet of material.

Permits and inspections are extensive for new masonry fireplaces. You'll need a building permit from the City of Calgary (\$300-\$600), multiple inspections during construction (foundation, framing, masonry, final), and the entire project must comply with current Alberta Building Code requirements for clearances, structural support, and fire safety. The permitting process alone can add 4-8 weeks to your timeline.

Calgary's climate creates specific challenges for masonry fireplaces. The extreme freeze-thaw cycles and chinook wind events accelerate mortar deterioration, making proper flashing and crown construction critical. Many Calgary masons recommend adding a **chimney cap and spark arrestor** (\$400-\$800) to protect against chinook-driven downdrafts and precipitation.

Efficiency is the biggest drawback — traditional masonry fireplaces operate at only 10-15% efficiency, actually creating a net heat loss in your home by drawing warm indoor air up the chimney. During Calgary's -30°C cold snaps, an open masonry fireplace can make your furnace work harder. Most Calgary homeowners who want the masonry aesthetic choose to install a **gas insert later** (\$2,500-\$5,500), which transforms the fireplace into a 70-85% efficient heating appliance.

Timeline typically runs 3-6 weeks depending on weather, permit approval speed, and mason availability. Masonry work is weather-dependent — mortar won't cure properly below freezing, so outdoor work is limited during Calgary's winter months.

Consider alternatives that deliver similar aesthetics at lower cost and higher efficiency. A direct-vent gas fireplace with custom stone surround (\$6,000-\$12,000) provides the visual impact of masonry with modern convenience and efficiency. Many Calgary homeowners find this approach delivers 90% of the aesthetic appeal at

60-70% of the cost, with dramatically better heating performance.

Need help finding a masonry contractor experienced with fireplace construction? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with local professionals who understand Calgary's specific climate challenges and permit requirements.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Royland Stucco
- Venkor Group Inc
- Allure Residential & Commercial inc
- Onsite Contracting and Electrical Services

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What are the clearance requirements for a wood stove in Alberta?

Wood stove clearance requirements in Alberta follow the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B365 installation code, which specifies minimum distances from combustible materials to prevent fire hazards.

These clearances are strictly enforced under the Alberta Building Code and must be verified during the mandatory Safety Codes Officer inspection.

Standard clearance requirements for most residential wood stoves are 36 inches (914mm) from the front of the stove to any combustible wall, 18 inches (457mm) from the sides and back to combustible walls, and 36 inches (914mm) above the stove to combustible ceiling materials. However, these are baseline measurements — your specific stove's manufacturer clearances take precedence and are listed on the CSA certification label attached to every approved unit. Some high-efficiency stoves with better heat shielding may allow reduced clearances, while older or basic models may require greater distances.

Floor protection is mandatory under Alberta regulations. The non-combustible hearth pad must extend at least 18 inches (457mm) in front of the stove door and 8 inches (203mm) beyond the sides and back of the stove. Acceptable materials include ceramic tile over cement board, natural stone, brick, or manufactured hearth pads that meet CSA standards. The pad must be installed over a non-combustible base — typically cement board over the subfloor. Regular hardwood, laminate, or carpet cannot be used as floor protection.

Clearance reduction systems can allow closer installation to walls when properly designed. Heat shields — non-combustible materials like sheet metal with an air gap behind them — can reduce required clearances by up to 50% when installed according to CSA B365 specifications. The air gap is critical; simply screwing metal sheeting directly to a wall provides no protection. Popular reduction methods include installing 24-gauge sheet metal with 1-inch spacers to create airflow behind the shield.

Chimney and stovepipe clearances are equally important. Single-wall black stovepipe requires 18 inches (457mm) clearance to combustibles, while double-wall stovepipe reduces this to 6-8 inches depending on the manufacturer. The transition from stovepipe to insulated Class A chimney must occur before passing through any combustible ceiling or wall. In Calgary's climate, proper chimney installation is critical — chinook wind events can create backdraft conditions that stress improperly installed systems.

WETT certification isn't legally required under the Alberta Building Code, but it's practically essential. Most Alberta home insurance companies require a WETT inspection report for coverage, and WETT-certified installers understand the nuances of clearance requirements, proper hearth construction, and chimney system design. A WETT inspection costs \$250-\$400 in Calgary and provides documentation that your installation meets Canadian

standards.

Common clearance mistakes include measuring from the wrong reference points (always measure from the stove body, not decorative trim), using combustible materials within clearance zones, inadequate floor protection that doesn't meet size requirements, and installing heat shields incorrectly without proper air gaps. These violations are fire hazards and will fail Safety Codes Officer inspection.

Building permits are required for new wood stove installations that involve chimney penetrations through the roof. The permit process ensures proper structural support for the chimney system and compliance with clearance requirements. Installation must be done by qualified professionals — while homeowners can legally install wood stoves in Alberta, the complexity of clearances, chimney systems, and permit requirements makes professional installation the practical choice.

Need help finding a WETT-certified wood stove installer? Calgary Fireplaces can match you with qualified professionals through the Calgary Construction Network who understand Alberta's specific requirements and Calgary's challenging climate conditions.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Calgary Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES
- Onsite Contracting and Electrical Services
- Alpine Exteriors siding and roofing
- Mike's Restoration Service
- Royland Stucco

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