



## **Eastleigh and Test Valley – Thatched Properties**

Following the recent increase of thatched fires within the Eastleigh and Test Valley area, owners of these properties are being urged to check the safety of their chimneys, flues and liners.

Investigations to the causes to these fires are still ongoing although early indications seem to suggest they have been caused by

- Excessive heat being transferred through the chimney or the liner on to the thatch and therefore creating an ignition source.
- Embers being emitted from the chimney and falling on to the roof area.

Each of the properties involved had wood burners installed as a main heating source. Modern enclosed solid fuel appliances are designed to burn at an increased temperature to promote a more efficient 'clean burn'. When fitted in to elderly chimneys with only a four inch layer of brick and a poorly maintained lining, the thatch becomes extremely vulnerable to 'heat transfer'. It is crucial that flues, liners and spark arrestors are properly checked and inspected by professionals and that chimney's are regularly swept.

The frequency of sweeps will depend on the material being burned, with chimneys over wood fires needing more regular sweeps than those with coal or oil. With an extended winter season, additional sweeps may also be required. It is also important that seasoned wood is burned to keep tar deposits, in chimneys or liners, to a minimum.

Local Test Valley crews have recently been visiting the affected areas to remind owners of the potential risks, and how they can take simple measures to minimise those risks. Thatch Information Packs, produced by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service have been distributed and provide home owners with checklists to minimise the impact a fire of this type may have.

We would urgently advise any concerned thatched property owners to contact their local Community Safety Officer for further safety advice or to arrange a home visit.

**Contact details for the Community Safety Officer for the Eastleigh and Test Valley Areas are as follows:**

**Paul Francis – Community Safety Officer (Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service)**

**Email – [paul.francis@hantsfire.gov.uk](mailto:paul.francis@hantsfire.gov.uk)**

**Contact - 07918887 999**