

Here are the 9 steps to maintain a Firewise fireplace:

1. Trim back limbs from the chimney at least 10 feet.
2. Follow the local fire recommendations directing when it is allowed to have a fire depending on the weather, humidity and wind conditions.
3. Check to make sure that the chimney cap was not damaged and was cleaned out.
4. Have the chimney cleaned by a licensed chimney sweep and make sure that animal and bird nests were removed.
5. Make sure that the draft was working properly.
6. Check the ember screen on the front of the fireplace.
7. Remove anything flammable from the front of the fireplace and install a 3-foot area in front of the fireplace that is rock or use fire resistant mats that can be purchased to put over carpeted areas in front of the fireplace.
8. Have a fire extinguisher.
9. Purchase a small galvanized can with a locking lid to keep old ash and hot coals in when cleaning out the fireplace. Keep this outside -- not on the porch, but in an area that is free of grass and weeds.