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QUALITY FIREPLACE SOLUTIONS

Gas Fireplaces, Are They Really Dangerous?

Over 80 million gas fireplaces have been installed in our American homes in the last 25 years. Yet, as of today there is not one training requirement or mandatory certification for anyone to become an installer of gas fireplaces. This lack of industry recognized standards or certifications presents an ever increasing health danger to the occupant due to the fact that gas fireplaces (as with any gas appliance) can emit dangerous levels of carbon monoxide (CO) if not technically and properly installed.

These appliances are installed in our living rooms, family rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms and basements. We enjoy our gas fireplaces not only for the heat it generates but also for the beauty and comfort that they give us. Since these are the rooms in our homes where we spend most of our time in close proximity with these gas appliances, safety of those appliances should be a major concern. Sadly, safety is not being addressed.

Gas furnaces and water heaters are installed in places out of sight and local building codes frequently require them to have make-up air in the same room beside them. Gas fireplaces are not required to have make-up air in the room and therefore we compete for the same oxygen as these appliances. As an added safety concern, quite often we then inhale the CO and other off-gases associated with vent less fireplaces or an improper installation.

Servicing of our gas fireplaces presents an even greater concern. We have the homeowner (or an unqualified service technician) with a screwdriver manipulating the various components and making the safety situation even more dangerous. I have received hundreds of phone calls from distraught homeowners telling me that their fireplace glass has just exploded in their family room after a home style servicing. I have seen instances where the consumer has drilled out the orifices and/or burner pans to get a better flame; rearrange the logs or replace the manufacturer required logs with those sold at the local hardware store, and then wonder why their gas fireplace won't work properly.

The gas fireplace industry is still very young and the consumer is not fully aware of the potential danger of this gas appliance in their home. Most manufacturers supply a manual with each unit sold to a customer containing important safety information. Most manuals, however, are either discarded or (unfortunately) never read.

The saving aspect to solving this situation has been the home inspection industry, of which A.S.H.I. has been the leader in this endeavor.

It is important that the general public understand the importance of having their gas fireplaces serviced by a reputable service company with trained, certified technicians to ensure their safety.