

EPA announces new plan to reduce wood furnace smoke

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Consumers Will Have Option to Choose Cleaner Models as the Popularity of This Alternative Home Heating Source Grows

Beginning this spring, consumers will be able to select cleaner burning outdoor wood-fired hydronic heaters (OWHHs) to heat their homes, thanks to a new partnership between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the furnace manufacturers. The voluntary program, announced Monday, called the EPA Outdoor Wood-fired Hydronic Heater Program, is expected to reduce OWHH emissions sooner than would have been accomplished by federal regulation. (OWHHs are also called outdoor wood furnaces.)

"Outdoor wood furnace manufacturers are committed to promoting and selling cleaner products, and we expect most of our member manufacturers to participate in the new partnership," said Jack Goldman, president of the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA). "The availability of cleaner furnaces will allow consumers to feel even better about choosing this renewable, convenient alternative for heating their homes."

The cleaner OWHHs will meet EPA's Phase I air emissions level of 0.60 pounds of fine particles per million btu heat input -- which represents a substantial reduction in emissions compared to today's furnaces. Consumers should look for a distinctive program label or hangtag on qualified models highlighting that the product has met all EPA testing guidelines. For more information about the design of the tag and participating manufacturers, visit EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/woodheaters>.

The rapid increase in the cost of home heating has resulted in a great deal of interest in affordable and renewable residential biomass (biofuels), including heating with OWHHs. These outdoor furnaces are freestanding units that provide heat and hot water to a home by burning wood. The units use the wood to heat water, which is then circulated to and from a home through underground, insulated piping. Once inside the home, the heated water circulates through heat exchangers, radiant floor tubing or radiators, providing heat.

"The program is a result of more than two years of collaboration between EPA, HPBA, outdoor wood furnace manufacturers, state regulators, testing labs and other stakeholders," said Goldman. "This new partnership effort, combined with proper installation and following the industry's best burn practices, will provide consumers with cleaner heating appliances that use a renewable, affordable energy source."

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