New Heating Choice for Massachusetts Homeowners

Arlington VA. Vent-free gas heating products have been approved for sale in the state of Massachusetts, announced William Tweardy, chairman of the Vent-Free Gas Products Alliance, a coalition of 24 members of the Vent-Free Gas Products Division of GAMA, an association of appliance and equipment manufacturers. Vent-free gas appliances provide supplementary heat efficiently and safely without a chimney or vent, so they can be installed almost anywhere in the home where there is access to a natural gas or propane supply line.

The new Massachusetts regulation covering installation, maintenance, and operation of vent-free gas products is 527 CMR 30.00, effective April 1, 2004. The regulation states that permits must be received from the head of the fire department and the local or state gas inspector having jurisdiction. The consumer must take a copy of the installation instructions to these offices. After the appliance is installed, each permit grantor must inspect and approve the installation for compliance with Massachusetts state regulations 527 CMR and 248 CMR before the product is operated.

The regulation requires purchasers of vent-free gas products to install and maintain at least one carbon monoxide (CO) detector and working smoke detectors in the home – a safety measure that is prudent for all households, whether they are heated by natural gas, propane, oil, or electricity. Vent-free gas products may not be installed in a bedroom or bathroom, and rooms and buildings served by a vent-free gas unit must also contain an operable, permanently installed primary source of heat. Sellers of vent-free gas products will provide each purchaser with a copy of the regulation.

Copies of the regulation 527 CMR 30.00 can be found at http://www.mass.gov/dfs/osfm/fireprevention/cmr/index.htm. To find copies of the 527 CMR 30.00 scroll down the page and click on 527 CMR 30.00.

Vent-free gas products are available as gas fireplaces, gas logs, gas stoves, and room heaters:

- Vent-free gas fireplaces look just like traditional fireplaces, and are available in full-size or compact models.
- Vent-free gas logs are installed in a traditional masonry or factory-built fireplace designed for wood burning.
- Vent-free gas fireplace inserts are installed within an existing masonry or factory-built fireplace and also offer a blower for improved heat distribution.
- Vent-free gas stoves are easily mistaken for wood stoves, but cost considerably less to install and operate.
- Vent-free gas space heating units come in a great variety of styles and in sizes that range from 6,000 to 40,000 Btu/hr.

These advanced gas appliances are called “vent-free” because there’s no need for venting, a hole-in-the-wall, or a chimney – only access to a natural gas or propane supply line. That means the homeowner can have an irresistible and captivating hearth just about anywhere they want in the home. For example, many homeowners use vent-free gas fireplaces to transform an unused, unsightly corner into the family’s favorite gathering place. Or an old, closed-up fireplace can flicker again with entrancing flames by the simple addition of vent-free gas logs

Vent-free space heaters are an especially popular choice for homeowners because of their remarkable efficiency. With vent-free heaters, all the warmth stays in the room so they are 99% efficient, providing plenty of heat for only pennies per hour. As the most cost-effective vent-free appliance, space heaters offer the optimum in installation flexibility. They must be permanently mounted on the wall or mounted on a floor stand, and they are available in many tasteful cabinet and burner designs.

The nearly 100% efficiency of vent-free gas appliances allows the homeowner to save heating dollars by zone heating – turning down the home’s thermostat and still enjoying safe and instant heating in the room(s) they are using. Furthermore, vent-free units offer peace of mind: most vent-free appliances do not use electricity, so they provide emergency heating even during power outages, a common occurrence during a New England snow or ice storm.

More than thirteen million American homeowners have relied on vent-free gas space heaters, fireplaces, logs, inserts, and stoves for supplemental heating since 1980. Vent-free gas products are selling throughout the country at a clip of 1.25 million units every year.

In response to the skyrocketing countrywide popularity of vent-free gas appliances, manufacturers have come out with an enormous choice of styles, sizes, and colors to suit any home décor. There is a wide variety of styles in woods to choose from, including driftwood, oak, weathered oak, maple, pine, aspen, birch, and many others. The homeowner can select a wood that’s appropriate to his or her region. There’s also a choice of log types, such as split oak and solid pieces of wood, even amazingly realistic glowing embers. A highly popular feature is the optional hand-held or wall-mounted remote control, which makes it a snap to precisely adjust the heating level in the room. Vent-free products range in size from 6,000 Btu (some turn down to 2,000 Btu) to a maximum of 40,000 Btu. By comparison, one burner on a gas cooking range on “high” uses about 10,000 Btu.

Outstanding Safety Record Since 1980

Every vent-free gas product sold in the U.S. is equipped with a precision-engineered Oxygen Detection Safety-Pilot (ODS), which automatically shuts off the gas supply if the oxygen level in the room approaches a defined minimum set by the National Product Safety Standard ANSI Z21.11.2. This safety standard requires the product to satisfy many construction and performance requirements. Over the 23 years since the introduction of the ODS in 1980, vent-free gas products have accumulated an outstanding safety record. There has never been a documented CO death due to the emissions of a vent-free product.

Vent-Free Products and Indoor Air Quality

To address questions concerning the impact of emissions from vent-free gas appliances on indoor air quality, an independent research study was conducted by the American Gas Association Research Division (AGAR) in 1996. This study, titled The Effect of Properly Sized and Operated Vent-Free Gas Products on Indoor Air Quality (IAQ), showed that vent-free gas appliances provide clean heat that meets all nationally recognized guidelines for acceptable indoor air quality.

Vent-Free Products and Indoor Humidity

All homes need some form of moisture indoors for health reasons and ease of breathing in the high heating months. Vent-free gas products produce small amounts of moisture in the air, which aids in achieving a comfortable moisture level in the home. According to a research study completed in December 2002 by risksciences, LLC, an independent scientific consulting firm nationally recognized for its expertise in human exposure modeling in residential environments, vent-free gas products add only 4 to 14 percent of moisture to most homes.

Vent-free gas products can be found in hearth product retail shops, hardware stores, specialty shops and home centers. For more information, write for a free copy of the newly updated 16-page Consumer Guide to Vent-Free Gas Products, which includes detailed sizing guidelines. Write to the Vent-Free Gas Products Alliance, 2107 Wilson Blvd., Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22201 or go to http://www.ventfree.org Or, to find the closest dealer to you, click on Vent-Free Alliance Members and go to a manufacturer’s site, type in your zip code and you will see the closest dealer in your neighborhood.