ASAP | APPLIANCE STANDARDS AWARENESS PROJECT

State Appliance Efficiency Standards Focus on: Gas Fireplaces

Gas fireplaces are gas- or propane-fired appliances that simulate a wood-burning fireplace. There are two types of gas fireplaces: decorative and heating. Decorative fireplaces are designed to produce a flame for visual effect rather than for heat. They are used in homes and commercial establishments such as hotel lobbies and restaurants. A heating gas fireplace is designed to provide heat to a room.

Both types of gas fireplaces can utilize continuous pilot lights. That means a small gas flame is constantly burning to be ready to immediately ignite a primary flame. As the name implies, a continuous pilot light burns gas continuously, all hours of the year, even if the fireplace goes without use for months at a time.

The continuous burning of gas, even the fireplace is not in use, creates significant gas waste and increased cost to consumers. It also creates a significant opportunity for savings.

Appliance standards are the best energy policy you've never heard of

Many of the products in our homes and businesses are covered by efficiency standards that reduce energy and/or water waste. Appliance standards can cover any energy- or water-using device, including home appliances, plumbing products, lighting products, and commercial and industrial equipment. In general, states can set standards for any products that are not subject to national standards. State standards are set by legislatures or state agencies and apply to products sold or installed in the state.

Proposed gas fireplace standard will cut energy waste by 68–85%

A heating gas fireplace that meets the efficiency levels recommended by the Appliance Standards Awareness Project (ASAP) will use 68% less gas than its least-efficient counterpart on the market today; a decorative gas fireplace will use 85% less gas. The average lifetime of both types of gas fireplaces is 15 years, and the average per-unit annual savings is just over 3 million BTUs. That means nearly 45 million BTUs of gas can be saved over the lifetime of a gas fireplace by switching from a low-efficiency product to a product meeting the proposed standard (for context, the average monthly residential gas use is about 43 million BTUs).

Standards will lower consumer costs

Efficiency standards for gas fireplaces would reduce consumer energy bills, keeping money in local economies. The average heating-gas-fireplace owner would save $515 over the typical 15-year life of the product. For decorative gas fireplaces, these savings rise to $570.

If enough states were to adopt gas fireplace standards such that only compliant products were sold nationally, annual gas savings would reach more than 2 trillion BTUs by 2025, and consumers would collectively save $24 million on their utility bills. As more-efficient gas fireplaces are purchased and replace older inefficient units, these annual savings increase to 11 trillion BTUs and $135 million by 2035.

National savings from gas fireplace standards

Heating-gas-fireplace owners would save $515 over the life of the product; decorative-gas-fireplace owners would save $570.

Annual gas savings by 2025 are enough to meet the gas needs of about 46,000 U.S. households for a year.

U.S. gas-fireplace owners would save $24 million per year on utility bills by 2025.

Energy	Money	Emissions
11	135	3,900,000
trillion BTUs saved annually by 2035	million dollars saved annually by 2035	metric tons of CO_2 avoided in total by 2035

The proposed standard is currently being met in a market of 38 million people

ASAP based the recommended standard on the energy efficiency standard for gas fireplaces developed and currently enforced by Natural Resources Canada, the Canadian equivalent of the U.S. Department of Energy. That standard went into effect January 1, 2020, across Canada (Population: 38 million). Since then, a similar standard has gone into effect in Washington State via building codes. Both standards require decorative and heating gas fireplaces to discontinue the use of continuous pilot lights and for heating gas fireplaces to achieve fireplace efficiency greater than or equal to 50%.

The gas fireplace industry supports eliminating continuous pilot lights

The Hearth, Patio, and Barbeque Association (HPBA), which represents gas fireplace manufacturers, has supported the phase- out of continuous pilot lights.[1] The HPBA has stated: "New technologies now exist that can more adequately replace continuous pilots, which provided an important safety feature, but have required consumers to manually extinguish the pilot on their gas appliances. This phase out saves homeowners money and achieves energy conservation when appliances are not in frequent use."[2]

Continuous pilot lights in gas fireplaces burn gas every hour of the year regardless of whether the fireplace is in use.

1. Hearth, Patio, and Barbecue Association, "Energy Conservation," accessed March 12, 2021, www.hpba.org/Energy-Conservation.
2. Ibid.