



Home comfort news
for the customers of
Atlas Air ClimateCare
and Atlas Robinson

An Engineer's Opinion

SPECIAL EDITION
Fall/Winter 2004



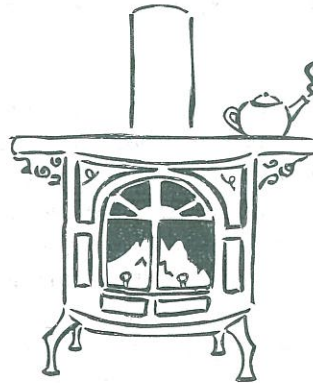
Editorial

By Roger Grochmal, P. Eng.,
President

Hearth and Home

Central heating has been around for a century or so, but when the weather turns cold, we Canadians still favour the warmth and romance of a fireplace. In Canada, fireplaces are so popular that it is difficult to sell your home without one.

This special edition of *An Engineer's Opinion* is all about the new generation of natural gas fireplaces. These fireplaces come in a tremendous range of styles, with flames that are much more realistic than those generated in earlier fireplace models. They are also clean, convenient, and safe: to turn them on, you simply flick a switch, and there is no mess from ashes or wood scraps. The sealed combustion chamber on



direct vent models greatly reduces the risk of carbon monoxide leakage into the house.

The best news about the new gas fireplaces is that they are not only beautiful, but many models deliver serious heat. This allows you to turn down the thermostat for the whole house, while remaining warm and cozy in a living area or bedroom. However, not all gas fireplaces are created equal: models vary greatly in efficiency, heat output, extra features, and appearance. Whether you are looking to upgrade an existing fireplace or add a new one, there are a few things we feel you should know to make an informed choice. If you have any further questions after reading this newsletter, please call.

Roger Grochmal



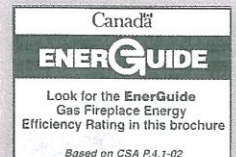
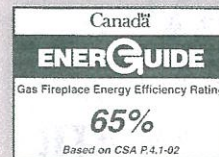
About An Engineer's Opinion

An Engineer's Opinion is published to assist homeowners in creating the healthiest, most comfortable environment in their homes at the most reasonable cost. If you have questions, criticism, or input, we want to hear them. Please call me personally at (905) 279-3440 or e-mail me at rgrochmal@atlasair.ca.

Save Money and Stay Warm!

A natural gas fireplace can be an excellent way to stay warm this winter while keeping your heating bills in check. If you choose a model that provides a good source of heat and you put it in an area where you spend a lot of time—such as a family room—then you won't need to keep the thermostat set as high as you normally would. When you shop for a fireplace that will serve as a space heater, be sure to compare the efficiencies of the models you are looking at. Recently, Natural Resources Canada published a fireplace rating chart on its website. The website address is www.oeenrcan.gc.ca/equipment. Once you get to the site, you'll need to choose 'Heating and Cooling Comfort' from the menu on the left, and 'Gas Fireplaces' from the menu

that appears on the page after that. On the 'Gas Fireplaces' page, you'll see a menu item called 'Fireplace Ratings'. When we looked at the chart, we were pleased to see that the models we offer—most notably, those by Vermont Castings—were among the most efficient.



ALL fireplace models will have an EnerGuide label, even if they aren't very efficient. The key is to compare the percentage efficiency. The higher the percentage, the more efficient the model is.

Fireplace Maintenance Saves Money and Keeps You Safe

What Kind of Fireplace is Right for You?

Three types of gas fireplaces are widely available in Canada: inserts, factory-built fireplaces, and free-standing units.

A fireplace insert is used when you want to convert a pre-existing wood-burning fireplace with a masonry chimney to a gas fireplace. With an insert, you can see the flames through a sealed glass front. The masonry chimney must be relined with an approved vent.

Factory-built gas fireplaces are installed in homes where there is no pre-existing fireplace. They are available with a variety of surrounds and mantles to choose from.

Free-standing fireplaces look more like wood stoves, and they are particularly good at supplying heat. Many free-standing models, such as those from Vermont Castings, come in beautiful, old-fashioned designs in lovely colours.

Like any gas-, wood-, or oil-fired appliance, natural gas fireplaces should be serviced every year to keep your family safe and ensure that you are burning gas as efficiently as possible. An appliance that is not properly maintained may not burn its fuel completely. When this happens, poisonous carbon monoxide gas can form and possibly leak into the house. (To protect your family from carbon monoxide poisoning, see Prevent Carbon Monoxide Now, below). We

recommend scheduling your fireplace maintenance in February and March, after the rush of the fall and winter heating season has passed. We will even give you a discount if you book your fireplace maintenance at this time. At Atlas, we are one of the few companies that will include a gas fireplace under a maintenance agreement, which guarantees that you will receive superior, priority service at a time that is convenient to you. Call our office today for more information.

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Now

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a deadly gas that is produced when burning is incomplete. What makes CO so deadly is that it replaces oxygen in the brain. After prolonged exposure to CO, a person or pet becomes seriously ill and may die. CO is very hard to detect because it has no odour, taste, or colour, and the early symptoms of CO poisoning are very similar to those of the flu. CO poisoning is the leading cause of death by poisoning in Canada, with over 100 deaths each year.

CO can come from any fuel-fired appliance, such as a furnace, fireplace (wood or gas), gas- or oil-fired water heater, or a gas barbeque. CO can even come from a car that is running in a garage attached to the house. The best

way to prevent CO poisoning is to have all fuel-burning appliances serviced each year by a qualified professional. You should also have a certified chimney contractor inspect your masonry chimney each year for moisture stains, cracks, or loose mortar. When you warm up your car this winter, back it out of the garage first.

Even if you take all of these precautions, it is still a good idea to have a CO detector on all levels of your home. These should be mounted midway between the floor and the ceiling. CO detectors should be placed at least five feet away from any combustion appliance, such as a fireplace or furnace.



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