

The Calgary Sun

WARM YOUR TOES WITH THE GLOW OF FIRE

Sunday, January 15, 2006
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Section: Homes

Are you looking to warm your home with a fireplace but don't know which kind to get?

Here's some good information to know to select the most suitable fireplace for your home -- whether it is conventional wood-burning or natural gas.

"Fireplaces can be a great way to provide warmth and comfort to your home and family during the winter months," says Mark Antonuk of ATCO EnergySense.

An important step to getting the most out of your fireplace is to select the system most suitable for your home. Then make sure you have the fireplace installed properly.

"Whichever style you do choose, employ the services of a qualified contractor -- someone who has the expertise to safely install the system," advises Antonuk.

Typically, conventional wood-burning fireplaces are inefficient and supply very little warm air to the inside of the home.

Most fireplace doors use tempered glass to withstand the heat, however tempered glass transmits very little heat from the fire to the room.

Heating your home on a cold winter day with this type of fireplace means you actually increase your energy consumption.

But you can increase efficiency by keeping the flue damper tightly closed when not in use. This keeps warm air from escaping out of the house.

Use tight-fitting glass doors to help reduce the amount of warm air lost to the outdoors.

Advanced combustion fireplaces use a secondary combustion process to ensure the wood burns better, which increases the fireplace's overall operating efficiency.

Consider installing an advanced combustion wood-burning fireplace into an existing fireplace as a cost-effective alternative to a conventional fireplace.

Insert fireplaces convert existing wood-burning fireplaces to natural gas.

They normally take burn air from inside the home which makes them less efficient than sealed combustion or direct-vent gas models.

Also, existing wood fireplace chimneys must be relined when natural gas insert models are installed.

These units fit into a wide range of fireplace cavities and have annual efficiency ratings of about 45%.

Direct-vent fireplaces are a sealed unit that uses outside air, rather than heated indoor air for the combustion process.

Annual efficiency operates at up to 70% depending on the variable-setting controls and thermostat options.

Free-standing gas appliances resemble new wood-burning stoves.

Since all surfaces are exposed to the room, these styles tend to be a more efficient heat-source.

After your fireplace is safely installed and operating efficiently, you'll have many good nights to curl up on the couch and leave winter behind.

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