

Natural gas fireplaces



The realism and warmth provided by today's natural gas fireplaces have contributed to their increasing popularity with homeowners. They are now among the leading optional features in new homes.

The convenience and safety of gas fireplaces make them a good choice for any room in your home or apartment. Buying, splitting and storing wood, and hauling ashes has lost its appeal for many. Clean, convenient, cost-effective and easy-to-use natural gas ends the work – and the mess – of a fireplace.

Because of growing concern for the environment, restrictions have been placed on wood-burning fireplaces and stoves in some U.S. communities. However, as consumers have become more aware of the many benefits of gas-fired hearth products – greater convenience, heating efficiency and environmental benefits – more and more are choosing natural gas over wood, even in areas of the country without wood-burning restrictions.

The natural gas advantage

Natural gas fireplaces fit today's lifestyles:

- Natural gas fireplaces can help enhance the appearance and marketability of any home.
- Natural gas units reduce by up to 99 percent the amount of pollutants and particles emitted into the air compared to wood.
- Instant ON/OFF operation. Flip a switch or touch a remote control.
- Continuous fuel supply.
- No wood to chop or logs to haul.
- No soot, no ashes, no messy clean-up, no creosote buildup in your chimney, no chimney fires.
- No sparks to burn your carpet.
- Using natural gas fireplaces can cost as little as 25 percent of the cost of burning wood.
- Most operate independently of electric power, providing an auxiliary home heating source during power outages.

Natural gas fireplaces

Natural gas fireplaces are structurally similar to wood-burning fireplaces. They are complete units that include a ceramic log set contained in a combustion chamber with a glass front. Their venting system eliminates the need for a traditional masonry chimney. Direct-vent sealed-combustion gas fireplaces can be vented either through the wall or roof. Typically, outdoor combustion air is provided through the outer cylinder of a concentric vent pipe for proper combustion independent of the home's atmosphere. Figure 1 also shows that room air is circulated within the fireplace to provide convective heating in addition to the normal radiant heating from the simulated logs, glass front and chamber walls.

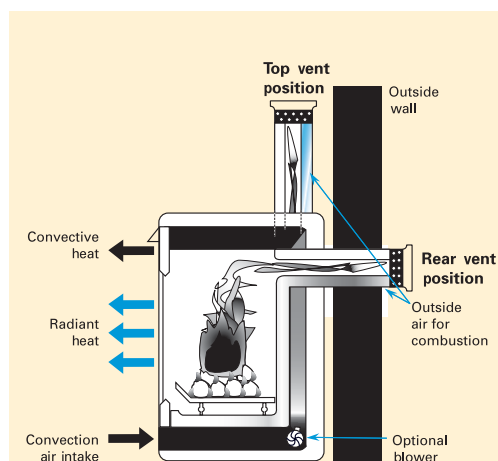


Figure 1. For gas fireplaces, venting systems are available that allow either vertical or sidewall venting. This system also provides outside air for combustion in tightly sealed homes.

Code issues

Gas-fired hearth products sold and used in the U.S. are covered by a variety of certification standards, building codes and local requirements. Some states, including Minnesota, prohibit the sale or use of unvented fuel-burning heaters. Check the codes in your area before purchasing a gas fireplace.

Figure 2 illustrates the venting options available with today's versatile natural gas fireplaces. A distinct advantage of a through-the-wall, direct-vent model is its flexibility – it can be located in almost any room without a chimney.

Typically, natural gas fireplaces can be safely installed with "zero clearance," adjacent to wood studs. They all include a gas log arrangement and choice of glass front and mantel styles to match any decor.

Most natural gas fireplace models have built-in blowers to increase heating effectiveness by circulating heat to a larger area.

Besides the traditional wall-mounted fireplace, designs are available with two, three or four open (glass) sides. Free-standing "Pot Belly" gas stoves are also available.

Control options: Gas fireplaces have electric ignition or a standing safety pilot light that burns continuously and lights the main burner whenever the gas is turned on. The pilot light safety prevents the main burner valve from opening if the pilot is not lit and shuts off the gas if the main burner fails to light.

Sealed combustion gas fireplaces with a standing pilot use a push-button piezo ignitor so the pilot can be ignited. Fireplaces are simply operated with an ON/OFF rocker switch on the fireplace or a wall switch.

Remote controls offer the ultimate convenience in operating your gas fireplace. Some remote controls also contain an adjustable thermostat that maintains a preset room temperature by turning the fireplace on and off.

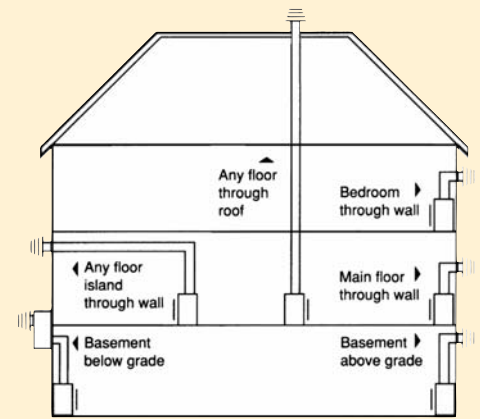


Figure 2. Many venting options are available for modern gas fireplaces.

Fireplace inserts

Complete fireplace inserts can be retrofitted into existing wood-burning fireplaces and usually they require no additions, such as glass doors, screens or other decorative accessories. They consist of a closed combustion chamber with ceramic logs and a glass front.

A 3" or 4" liner and air intake is attached to the insert, run up the existing chimney, and then vented to the outside for efficient and safe operation. Inserts offer the same conveniences and safety features as complete gas fireplaces, with gas logs, warm air circulation, remote controls and other features.

As with nearly all gas-fired appliances, most gas fireplaces and inserts undergo rigorous safety testing by the American National Standards Institute before they are certified.

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