



September 25, 2019

To: Whom It May Concern

RE: Washington State Energy Code proposal WSEC R-27,R4022.4.2.1 Gas Fireplace Efficiency

Hearth & Home Technologies (HHT) is headquartered in Lakeville, Minnesota and we are the market leader in the manufacture of gas, wood and pellet burning fireplaces, stoves and inserts. Our well-known brands include Heatilator®, Heat & Glo®, Majestic®, Monessen®, Quadra-Fire®, Harman®, Vermont Castings® and PelPro®. We employ over 1,200 member-owners and have manufacturing plants and distribution centers in Iowa, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Vermont, North Carolina, California and Maryland.

The building codes are not the appropriate location or vehicle for setting these kinds of regulations and HHT cannot support these code proposals, as there are significantly more complexities to setting requirements like these than this process would allow. Appliance efficiency and operating discussions should be through either a statute or regulatory function that involves more stakeholders since in the end it will dictate how an appliance must be manufactured and sold in Washington State.

The proposal does not draw a distinction between a heater rated ANSI Z21.88 fireplace and a decorative ANSI Z21.50 fireplace. As you are probably aware, Canada (which has a more diverse climate overall than Washington) has set a minimum 50% efficiency for heaters and no minimum for decorative. Similarly, California is working with stakeholders to determine a minimum efficiency for heaters and no minimum for decorative. The common decision of Canada and California to consider heater and decorative as different product categories speaks to the recognition that the two product categories are intended for different purposes. To be clear, heater and decorative gas fireplaces are first and foremost decorative as they are the focal point of a room, the consumer can then choose the fireplace that best fits their heating needs. If the proponent of this proposal (who stated at the Spokane public meeting that he wants to work with industry on a solution) had reached out to industry prior to submitting his proposal, some of these issues could have been resolved so as not to waste the time of the Council.

The proposal also does not contain appropriate economic considerations that must be developed for a rule that would impact, manufacturer's, dealers and distributors and the consumers of the state of Washington. The proposal follows the same line of thinking of the DOE, in that they continue to try and fit this product category into the same line of thinking for a utilitarian heater which has only one primary function, provide heat. Gas fireplaces on the other hand, as already stated, are primarily decorative and are a focal point of a room and do not fit the same line of thinking. While it is possible to make them more efficient, this is not always what consumers are asking for or is the primary reason for wanting a gas fireplace. Also, since the consumer is primarily in the room when the fireplace is being operated, they do not want to see their fireplace cycling on and off while in the room. They want the option to purchase the fireplace that that first provides the aesthetic they are looking for and then the amount of heat from the fireplace they want.

The minimum efficiency proposal for heaters and decorative gas fireplaces would impact many millions of dollars annually for Hearth & Home Technologies and its dealers and distributors with more than 60% of sales into Washington state being affected. It also takes away consumer options for the type of gas fireplace the consumer wants, which for many may not be higher efficiency fireplaces. We urge the State Building Code Council to oppose these proposals and ask the Department of Commerce work with stakeholders to determine an appropriate path regarding regulation of gas hearth products.

Regards,

Gregg Achman
VP Engineering Standards
Hearth & Home Technologies