



Home Tips®



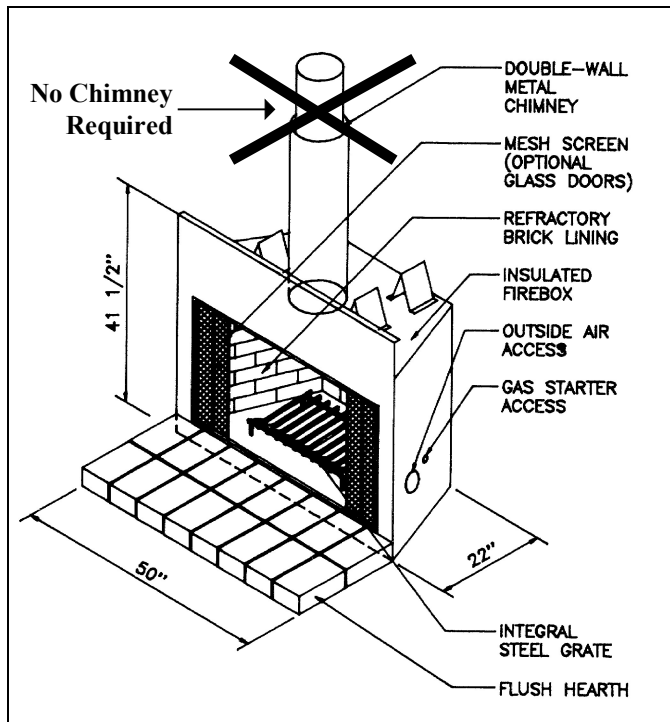
• CHRISTIAN BUILDING INSPECTORS, INC., 1003 STAR COURT, NORCROSS, GEORGIA 30093, (770) 925-8518 • JUNE 1997 •

Q & A

Install A Fireplace Anywhere!

A neighbor was talking about a new type of fireplace that does not require a chimney or vent pipe and can be installed anywhere in the house. How is this possible and do they really work? Also, do you know where we can call for additional information?

When most people think fireplace, they think chimney and smoke. That changed with the advent of "Direct-Vent" gas fireplaces, which replaced the chimney with a horizontal duct that went out through your wall. Now manufacturers have gone one step further with "Vent-Free" fireplaces and heaters, which require no venting to the outdoors. For homeowners, this makes it possible to put a gas heater or fireplace (they're essentially the same) along an interior wall, where ducts to the outside would be difficult to install. Vent-free units are also useful for adding supplemental heat to basements, additions and garages.



Two technological improvements make these vent-free appliances much safer than old-fashioned space heaters. The first is better burners, to minimize by-products like carbon

monoxide. The second is the addition of an oxygen depletion sensor, which shuts the gas off if oxygen levels fall below a safe level.

You may think it's odd, letting combustion products from a fire go right into your home to pollute your household breathing air. But these vent-free devices have a good safety record. Since 1982, four million vent-free heating devices have been installed in American homes, and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has not identified a single death from their emissions. Also, a recent study determined that vent-free heaters, when properly sized, installed and used, will produce pollutants and combustion by-products that are below the levels established by the CPSC, OSHA and other regulatory agencies. One manufacturer, Superior Fireplace, has even added a catalytic converter to their fireplace, reducing the output of pollutants to almost zero.

Vent-free gas appliances do add a large amount of water vapor to your home - several gallons a day for larger units. If you already have a condensation problem in winter, this added water vapor is likely to worsen it, but if you suffer from dry air, it will undoubtedly help.

Critics of vent-free gas heaters point out that we know little about the long term effects of *low-level* exposure to combustion by-products, and that even vented furnaces have produced several hundred deaths because of malfunctions.

WHAT TO DO

If you are planning to use a vent-free heater or fireplace, follow these guidelines:

- Use only for *supplemental* heat, not for the principal heat in a dwelling. This is important: The units are not designed to be your main heat source.
- Do not use them in a sleeping room, bathroom or RV.
- Use the right size of heater, according to the manufacturer's guidelines.
- Have it professionally installed.
- Finally, if you're considering a fireplace, be sure to see it in use before you buy, to be sure the flame color is acceptable.

For additional information, you can contact any of the following manufacturers:

- Heatilator, Inc. (319) 385-9211
- Majestic Co. (219) 356-8000
- Superior Fireplace Co. (800) 854-0257
- Vermont Castings, Inc. (802) 234-2300
- Temco Fireplaces (800) 249-1200
- Readybuilt Fireplaces (410) 233-5833

