

Wood: a home-heating alternative

As home heating with wood becomes more popular, considerations for safety, efficiency and proper forest management must all be taken into account.

The Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service, the Department of Forestry and other organizations have set up a mobile display unit emphasizing those points. The display is a continuation of the recent statewide Home Heating With Wood program.

Henry A. Huber, MSU Extension forestry specialist, said the trailer will serve as an educational device that can be left unattended in a parking lot, at a county fair or other exhibition. It consists of three displays and information for the homeowner and others interested in heating with wood.

One side of the display shows a UL-approved wood stove and its installation components. Another side shows safety devices homeowners should consider using. A third side deals with improving the efficiency of wood heating.

"Statistics show that 40 percent of the households in the Upper Peninsula are using wood as a substantial proportion of their home heating," Huber said. He estimates that 11-12 percent of all households in Michigan may be using wood to heat their homes.

As the use of wood stoves increases so do the number of deaths and injuries related to some fires. There were 18 fire-related fatalities during the 1979-80 heating season, Huber said, and 14

fatalities during the 1980-81 heating season, as of Feb. 1.

Numerous injuries and extensive property damage often accompany such deaths. But a proper educational program promoting the safe use of wood as heat could help to drastically reduce those numbers.

The prevention of creosote build-up, the proper use of brushes for cleaning, the use of fire and smoke detectors in the home and the importance of a nearby fire extinguisher are some of the safety elements emphasized in the MSU display unit.

Huber said that fireplaces are designed for aesthetic purposes and often allow the heat to escape. Wood stoves, on the other hand, give off more heat

and are therefore more efficient. The display provides several tips for getting the maximum efficiency out of wood as a home-heating fuel.

Huber said that the mobile display unit will be ready for exhibits about June 1. Requests will be honored according to travel costs, and priority will be given to high-visibility shows in rural areas, he said. The forestry department is responsible for scheduling and will pay one-way mileage. The exhibitor must pick it up, however.

Scheduling may be done through the county Cooperative Extension Service office, or by contacting Henry Huber at (517) 355-0006, Department of Forestry, 126 Natural Resources, Michigan State University, East Lansing 48824.

Thursday, May 28, 1981

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Gas company changes bills

Michigan Consolidated Gas Co. customers will receive a new bill this month containing more detailed information about their individual accounts.

The new bill will contain energy conservation information and also provide customers with a comparison of gas usage and weather information on a year-to-year basis.

Such information, the company said, should prove useful in helping customers determine the success of any conservation efforts they may have taken.

The bills will include return mailing envelopes.

"With the cost of all forms of energy rising, including natural gas, it is important that we supply our customers with as much detailed information about their accounts as possible," said Stephen Ewing, vice president for consumer service.

"The new statement bill has been designed to meet this goal."

In addition to account information, the bills will also supply customers with details about existing and new programs the utility has to meet customer needs.

The new bill format, which replaces the former postcard bill, was developed after presenting several versions to consumer groups to determine the ease of reading and understanding, Ewing said.

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