

Heating: Unflued gas heaters

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- Consider a change

Unflued gas heaters are used in a third (35%) of New Zealand homes. On the face of it there are many benefits to using unflued gas heaters. They seem to be a relatively cheap option, and they're portable too.

But what makes unflued gas heaters convenient also makes them unhealthy.



Unflued gas heaters release dangerous gases

Because they do not have fixed, attached vents to the outside, they release dangerous gases into the enclosed spaces they heat: carbon dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide in particular.

Tests show that using an un-vented gas heater for just one hour can result in levels of nitrogen dioxide three times the World Health Organisation limit for occupant health. Exposure to nitrogen dioxide inflames the lungs and reduces immunity to infections; it prolongs the effects of colds, causes coughing and wheezing, and can result in more frequent and more severe asthma attacks.

In high concentration, carbon monoxide causes asphyxiation and death, but even at low levels it results in tiredness, clumsiness, loss of concentration, nausea, dizziness and headaches.

Quite simply, by using unflued gas heaters we are risking the health of our families. While it's unlikely to have fatal consequences, people living in homes heated this way are likely to be sicker more often, with higher health costs and more time off school and work.

The health issues of unflued gas are well-recognised overseas where some countries have banned their use in homes. Although New Zealand hasn't yet restricted use of unflued gas heaters, warnings about their use have been issued by government bodies including the Ministry of Health, EECA, Ministry of Consumer Affairs and regional public health services.

Unflued gas heaters make your home damp

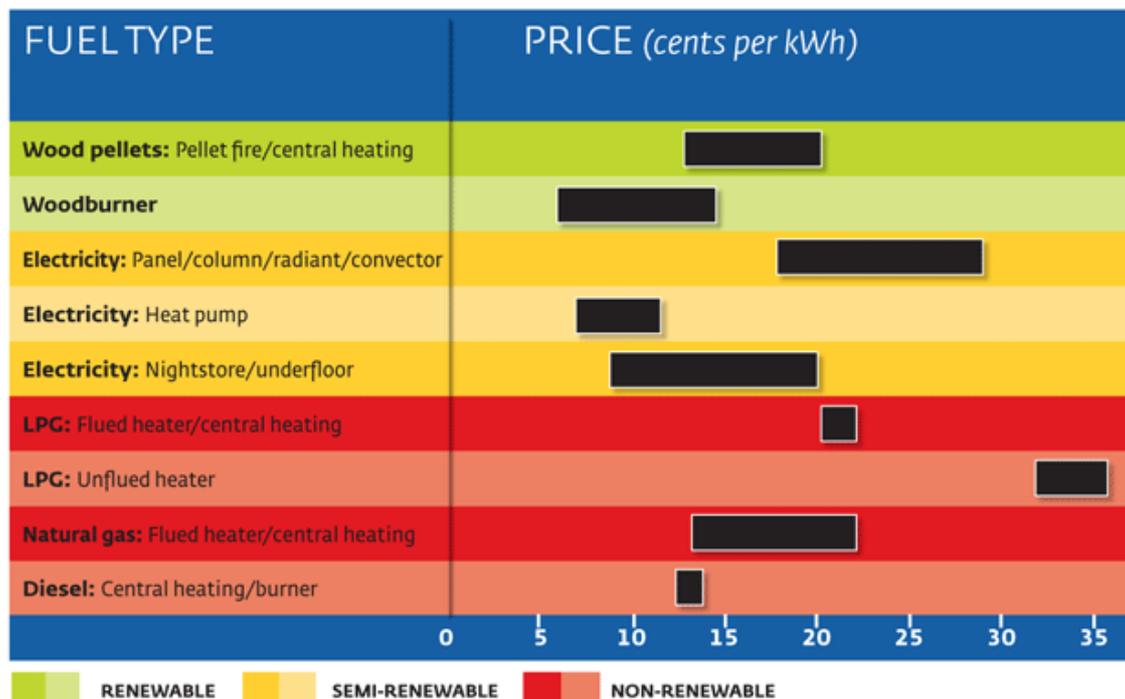
Unflued gas heaters do more than release toxic gasses into our homes. They are also a prime source of condensation, releasing as much as one litre of moisture into the air for every hour of use.

Not only that ... but where there's condensation, there's mould. Mould is not just unsightly and damaging; it's unhealthy too and can make respiratory illnesses like asthma worse.

Unflued gas heaters is expensive

Many people using unflued gas heaters simultaneously run a dehumidifier to reduce moisture levels in the air. In fact BRANZ surveys show that households with unflued LPG heaters are twice as likely to have a dehumidifier. At between \$0.14-\$0.42 per litre of water removed, dehumidifiers are expensive to run. Getting rid of indoor moisture is the hidden cost of using unflued gas heating.

Although unflued gas heaters are perceived to be a cheap heating solution, recent increases in gas prices show they are actually a more expensive form of heating than most other methods. Consumer New Zealand figures suggest replacement with a flued system (to avoid need for dehumidifier) or electric heating would be more price competitive for homeowners (Visit <http://www.consumer.org.New Zealand/reports/heating-options/fuel-prices-compared>)



GUIDE TO THE TABLE PRICE Firewood prices are based on our January 2010 survey of prices for pine. Other prices are from data collected during February 2010. GST is included.

Consider a change

If you have an unflued gas heater, consider retiring it for good and replacing it with a healthy clean heating device. It will keep your family healthier and might save you more than just money in the long run.

For more information:

- See Fact sheets on
 - Introduction to heating your home
 - Keeping the heat in: Overview
 - Healthy indoor air
- For further information, a range of affordable alternative heating options and healthy home-heating tips, visit:
 - www.beaconpathway.co.nz
 - <http://www.smarterhomes.org.nz/energy/heating/>
- Find out more about the subsidies offered by Warm Up New Zealand: Heat Smart at www.energywise.govt.nz
- Visit Consumer New Zealand website for the latest on heating costs: <http://www.consumer.org.nz/reports/heating-options/fuel-prices-compared>