

Home Efficiency

Tankless water heaters are putting the heat on outdated technology

Okay here is the scenario. You bought your house last year, but it was built in 1988. You know that you need to do a little fixing up to make it just right for you and your spouse, so you spend most of your efforts on paint, tile, landscaping and all the other amenities that the neighbors will see and compliment you on for your decorative panache and handy man prowess. Chances are you didn't spend copious amounts of time basking in the remarkable beauty of that behemoth in the utility room that everyone calls a hot water heater. (Technically, it should be called a cold water heater. Think about it!)

So you've got the homestead looking just about right, except for that massive stream of water that is flowing under door of the utility room. You don't remember authorizing any water sport activities in there for the kids, and the aquarium is at the other end of the house, ergo, something must be amiss.

You stealthily sneak up to the door like a warrior scout doing reconnaissance on a shrewd and cunning enemy. Beads of sweat building on your upper lip as you anticipate the carnage that is about to unfold before you. Your hand trembling, you reach forth to put a death grip on the door knob and with one last and labored breath you open the barrier that divides you from the certain emotional and veritable economic cataclysm that awaits within. THE BEHEMOTH IS DEAD! Water flowing from it's rusted body, it speaks to you in no uncertain terms, it needs to be replaced.

So what do you do now? Well, from where I stand, it is a question of how much vision you have for the future. For the least initial investment, you can buy another standard tank type water heater, wait for the next deluge, and continue to pay for storing and heat water 24 hours a day, 7 days a week even if your not using it. Or, you can install a tankless water heater for a few dollars more up front, and have all of the hot water you could ever use and only pay for it when you use it.

Tankless water heaters are about the size of a brief case, and they can be mounted on a wall, leaving lots of extra room underneath for storage. Your water line connects to the unit and a sensor is activated to heat the water whenever you turn on a hot water faucet. There is no storage tank, the water is heated on demand as it passes through the unit. As such, you are only using energy when you have a need for hot water. Some of the gas models are so efficient that they don't even have a pilot light. They can cost twice as much as the older style tank type, but the reduction in the cost of operation provides ample savings that will pay for the difference and more for years to come. It is not unusual to see savings of more than \$250 per year for an average size family.

Not only are the tankless heaters far more efficient, they will provide endless amounts of hot water. So if you are in the mood to take a 2 hour shower, or if your 5 refrigerator raiding guests from up north all need



to shower after bringing half of the beach home with them, you will still have all of the hot water that you will need to wash the clothes, bathe the poodle or do whatever might be required.

Gas models (there are electric ones available as well but frequently require electrical upgrades) provide the greatest amount of hot water, up to 6 gallons per minute on the smaller models, and are available for natural gas and propane gas if natural is not available in your area.

Like the old advertisement used to say, " You can pay me now, or you can pay me later." The bottom line is if you have a vision for the future, it is more economical to go with the better technology of tankless, and if you want to disagree, I'm all ears. Send me an email. I love to read the ramblings of the opinionated deranged.

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