



Inspections

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The City Sentinel

Your House A to Z Jack L. Werner Ph.D



Water heater questions dog homeowners

By Todd Feehan and
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Water heaters bring many questions to homeowners' minds. Here are a few facts that may help save you money and time when you need to replace your water heater.

Gas or electric? Most people don't have much choice. Unless you're building a new home, you have to go with what the system was designed for. For those who have both options, electric heaters are less expensive than gas to replace, but gas has a far better recovery rate. Most people with electric heaters compensate for the recovery lag with larger tanks.

Size? The answer depends on need as well as space. 40- and 50-gallon heaters are the most common. 30-gallon heaters fit special needs of homes with little space. Since 30-gallon heaters are not as common, they tend to cost the most. The difference between a 40- and 50-gallon heater is generally within \$35.

Brand? There are three main manufacturers of hot water heaters in use. The best brand depends on your specific preferences. The question consumers should be asking is "What type of heater is

best for me?" 6-year tanks are the most common, largely due to low cost. For a couple hundred dollars more you can get a better-built 12-year tank with twice the warranty and lower operating costs. 12-year tanks tend to perform better than 6-year tanks because of better parts installed in the unit.

Raising the tank? This is another misunderstood rule. Water heaters inside garages or any place where flammables are likely to be stored must be raised. Generally, heaters located in kitchens, attics, second floors, hallways, and fully converted garages are not required to be raised. Unfortunately for the homeowner, I was once required to raise a tank in an area where it would not typically have been required, had the gas weed eater not been placed in the same closet when the city official showed up to inspect the tank installation! So please use good common sense when storing equipment.

"Can't you just change it out? I think the codes are unnecessary!" One would think that where safety is concerned there wouldn't be a discussion. The debate on bringing a water heater up to code is simple. A plumber is required to

follow the rules of the plumbing code. Homeowners, helpful neighbors, and "jacks of all trades" install many water heaters. None of these "helpers" is licensed or insured. One should ask, "Who is liable when something goes wrong and causes flood or fire?" Your insurance company will probably refuse to pay for damage caused from a water heater not installed by a licensed professional. Please keep your family, property, and neighbors in mind before you decide to cut corners.

If you are in the market for a new water heater and you have any questions, please call your plumber to discuss your options. If you don't have a regular plumber, then call us at Dad's Plumbing at 602-2615.

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