

PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

FIREWOOD AS A HEAT SOURCE

A recent article in the Philadelphia Inquirer detailed how firewood is making a comeback as a viable and affordable heat source in Philadelphia and the surrounding counties. According to the article, there are presently 2.5 million wood heated homes across the nation and wood heated homes have doubled in Philadelphia and the eight surrounding counties since 2005. Bucks County has the most with around 3200 homes utilizing wood.

The article contained much general information on burning wood, but lacked specific valuable info for the consumer. For anyone considering burning wood, there are a number of important issues to consider, each very important in its own way. Two major issues are cost and safety. As to safety, we recommend you speak with an established wood stove dealer who can recommend sizing and cover the various aspects of safely burning wood. For instance, hardwood is recommended as the wood of choice and firewood must be adequately seasoned prior to burning. Burning green, unseasoned wood can lead to a build up of creosote in your flue which if ignited, can burn your house down.

Regarding cost, you can of course cut and haul your own if you have the knowhow and are properly equipped. Henry Ford once said, "If you cut your own wood, it warms you twice". Of course there are many vendors of firewood in the marketplace, but the consumer must be knowledgeable about the process in order to get the best value.

Pennsylvania consumers and vendors should be aware that there are specific laws and regulations that govern the sale of not only firewood, but also several processed wood products used for fuel. For instance, Pennsylvania law requires your typical cut firewood to be "sold by the cord of 128 cubic feet or fraction thereof". The law also requires that the delivery of firewood be accompanied by a delivery ticket or sales invoice with the following information clearly depicted.

1. the name and address of the vendor;
2. the name and address of the purchaser;
3. the date delivered;
4. the quantity delivered and the quantity upon which the price is based, if this differs from the delivered quantity;
5. the price of the amount delivered; and
6. the identity, in the most descriptive terms commercially practicable, including any quality representation made in connection with the sale.

Many newer stoves today burn wood pellets which have several advantages over cut firewood. Pellet stoves tend to burn much cleaner and produce less ash during the burning process. Pellet stoves also feed automatically from a hopper at the back of the stove which again makes the process much less labor intensive. Also, you should know that wood pellets are sold by weight and not volume. You will see them mainly in forty (40) pound bags, but you can get deliveries by the ton for bulk amounts.

Lastly, as newer air quality restrictions come on line from the EPA you will want to install a stove that meets these much higher emission standards. For more information on wood stoves, contact your local wood stove dealer or for complaints or inquiries about deliveries contact your county office of weights and measures or the state office at 717-787-9089.

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