

# The latest in home heating offers comfort and efficiency

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Citizen advertising features

From radiant heating in foundations and floors to the latest in home furnaces and fireplaces, builders are making sure home buyers aren't left out in the cold when it comes to the latest in home comfort.

When it comes to home heating, builders are offering more comfort and energy efficiency than ever before. Gas stoves and fire places are steadily replacing their traditional wood-burning cousins while emerging technologies, such as radiant floor heating and intelligent furnaces are growing in popularity.

When buying new, homeowners are getting the latest in home heating technology, designed to meet strict building code requirements as well as customers' demands for greater comfort. And since higher efficiency means lower fuel costs, homeowners can turn up the heat another degree and snuggle up in front of the fireplace secure in the knowledge they are heating their home in the cheapest way possible.

## Gas fireplaces: the romance of live flame

Steve Cotnam, president of the Fireplace Center, says supplementary heating units such as fireplaces and stoves, are becoming increasingly popular in upgrades and new homes alike.

Mr. Cotnam says the biggest seller these days is gas fireplaces, which offer the romance of live flame without having to carry wood, light a fire and clean the hearth afterward. Exhaust is expelled through a small vent in the wall, doing away with the need for a traditional chimney. Most gas fireplaces also burn oxygen-rich outdoor air, increasing their efficiency.

Mr. Cotnam says people are turning to supplementary heating for practical as well as aesthetic reasons. Sales of oil, propane, wood and gas appliances have received a boost from last winter's ice storm when many people lost faith in electricity. "In case of a power failure, most conventional furnaces won't work, but people found that these alternatives worked well," says Mr. Cotnam.

"Gas fireplaces have taken off incredibly," agrees Brian Sindall of Technical Dimensions, a custom home builder and a leader in energy efficient homes. "The technology, efficiency and design has improved tremendously and the flames look real."

As far as primary heating goes, Sindall says traditional forced air is still the standard, although alternative technologies are beginning to hit the market.

## Radiant heating: toasty toes

One of these technologies is in-slab radiant heating. Similar in many ways to the traditional radiators found in many older homes, this technology offers the added benefit of heating from the floor up.

That means your toes stay toasty as the floor gently heats your home. Radiant heating also offers advantages for people with allergies or other environmental sensitivities. Unlike forced air, radiant heat won't circulate dust and other particulate from around the house.

Joshua Teixeira of Legalett Canada, which specializes in the construction of radiant concrete slab on grade foundations, says that although the technology is not new, it has been gaining in popularity in recent years.

Originally developed in Sweden about 30 years ago, the Legalett system has been available in Canada for about 10 years. Mr. Teixeira estimates they do about two to three installations per month in all areas of the building industry.

A Legalett radiant slab is an eight-inch thick structurally reinforced concrete slab on grade foundation that heats through a network of hot air ducts embedded in the slab. Mr. Teixeira points out that concrete construction has a number of benefits, such as

suitability in problem soils (no footings required), comfortable living space (no drafts), extended construction season, temperature stability during power outages such as Ice Storm '98 and no mold, mildew or dampness.

Technical Dimensions installed radiant floor heating in the home of Kevin Lee. Because the home is located in a sensitive soil area next to the Rideau River, and had to be built on a concrete slab, Mr. Lee opted for radiant heating. "Concrete floors are cold on the feet," he says. "I wanted comfort"

Although it's a little more expensive than forced air, Mr. Lee says the extra comfort was worth it. "It's a little bit of extra cost but over time added comfort can go a long way," he says.

Mr. Lee says it's hard to say whether he has saved on heating costs by using a radiant slab, since forced air heats the upper floors of his home. But he says he would seriously consider radiant floor heating throughout his home if he built again.

Please see "Heating" H6

