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Consumer Demand Burns Hot for Fireplaces, Stoves, Inserts and Log Sets *Efficiency is the Most Important Factor When Considering Hearth Installation*

Arlington, VA -- September 28, 2006: Sales of hearth products continue to burn hot, as consumers across the country look for ways to combat rising energy costs and heat their homes more efficiently. According to the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association's (HPBA) data, demand for fireplaces, stoves, inserts and log sets in 2005 rose eight percent from the previous year.

The findings, highlighted in HPBA's biennial consumer survey, show consumer use and attitudes toward hearth products. Results showed that consumers are particularly concerned with energy savings and efficiency. In fact, 65 percent of those surveyed said efficiency was the most important factor when considering a hearth appliance for their homes.

Efficiency and Zone Heating

Increased fuel costs and more focus on efficiency are key reasons for the continued popularity of hearth products. A central furnace cycles on and off several times an hour and heats an entire house – even unoccupied rooms – wasting money. Studies indicate that zone heating solutions can provide energy savings of 20 to 40 percent.*

“Using supplemental hearth appliances to warm the rooms that are occupied most allows families to turn down the central furnace thermostat,” says Jack Goldman, president of HPBA. “Zone heating provides the heat where you need it and when you need it, adding to a home's comfort and ambiance, but also reducing household fuel consumption and saving consumers money.”

When choosing a hearth product as a primary or secondary heat source, stoves and fireplace inserts are consumers' two most popular options. The majority of consumers that own a fireplace insert (82 percent) or own a stove (79 percent) emphasize their importance in heating their homes.

Sixty (60) percent of those who modified their fireplace to make it more efficient installed a fireplace insert. Of those respondents, 63 percent chose a wood-fueled product and 37 percent selected a natural gas/propane product.

Manufacturers are continually working to increase the hearth product options available to consumers. Today's models offer higher efficiency ratings, cleaner burning technologies, and more diverse product designs.

“Historically, hearth products were selected primarily for their ambiance. Today, consumers are learning that they can have both ambiance and efficient heating by installing a new hearth product,” continued Goldman.

A Variety of Fuels, A Variety of Product Options

Shipments of hearth products increased to 3.2 million in 2005 compared to 2.9 million in 2004. Despite the increase of natural gas prices, gas and propane hearth products accounted for 66 percent of the total shipments. Wood fueled 18 percent of the products, with 12 percent powered by electricity and four percent by pellets (wood or corn).

Shipments of pellet stoves and inserts have shown significant growth recently, providing a clean-burning and cost-saving supplemental heat source. Pellet stoves use fuel made from renewable resources such as recycled wood waste that would normally be destined for landfills. Some pellet stoves can also burn dried corn. In 2005, shipments of freestanding pellet stoves and inserts topped 118,000 – a whopping 76 percent increase compared to 2004.

Shipments of electric hearth appliances, including fireplaces, freestanding stoves, log sets and inserts, increased 27 percent in the past year, from 300,000 in 2004 to 380,000 last year. Electric appliance technology has evolved to provide faux fires through creative use of lighting, sound and mirrors. Electric hearth appliances can be used as heaters or for atmosphere, and can be plugged in wherever there is an outlet.

Shipments of cordwood appliances, including fireplaces, freestanding wood stoves and inserts, also showed impressive growth, increasing 13 percent compared to 2004. Today’s new wood burning technology has not only become less polluting, but also more efficient over the past decade. According to HPBA, shipments of cordwood products went from 498,630 in 2004 to 561,596 in 2005.

Shipments of gas fireplaces, stoves, inserts, fireboxes and gas logs continue to dominate the market, rising two percent last year. Manufacturers shipped 2,141,165 gas appliances in 2005—an increase of 37,480 from 2004. Easy, safe and efficient, gas appliances are a convenient way for consumers to enjoy a warm fire at the touch of a switch, thermostat or remote control.

HPBA recommends consumers visit one of the nearly 4,800 retail hearth product stores across North America when considering the purchase of a new hearth product. Many employ staff certified by the National Fireplace Institute® for planning and installation. Specialty retailers can help homeowners understand the wide range of choices available to them as well as to determine the type of fuel that best meets their needs.

HPBA has also published an online brochure that highlights the differences between the appliance options, the fuels and the estimated costs of product purchase and installation. Visit www.hpba.org to learn more.

*ACEEE 1990 study on Energy Efficiency in Buildings. Proceedings. Volume 9.

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About Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA)

The Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA), based in Arlington, VA, is the North American industry association for manufacturers, retailers, distributors, representatives, service firms and allied associates for all types of hearth, barbecue and patio appliances, fuels and accessories. **Reporters, mark your calendars for HPBA’s 2007 EXPO in Reno, Nevada, March 14-17, to see that largest showcase of the industry’s new technologies and product offerings.**