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Consumer Survey Indicates Fireplaces and Stoves Play Key Role in Selling Homes

ARLINGTON, Va., October 12, 2006 - Fireplaces and freestanding stoves not only make a house more inviting and livable, but consumers also think they play a key role in selling them.

Among the 1,700 homeowners across the country recently surveyed by the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA), 59 percent considered their fireplace or stove a major selling point to home buyers (a 20 percent increase compared to 2004).

Many home buyers agree, with 22 percent saying an existing fireplace or stove played a significant role in their choice to buy a specific home. This trend coincides with National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) data that reports a fireplace is one of the top three items people look at when buying a home.

“In today’s market, home sellers in many parts of the country need all the advantages they can get,” said HPBA President Jack Goldman. “Hearth products not only enhance the quality of life in a home but, when it’s time to put it up for sale, they often become a key selling point.”

According to the survey, consumers believe that fireplaces and stoves increase the value of their home. Respondents estimate the increase of a home’s value range from \$2,900 (for gas fireplaces and freestanding stoves) to \$4,400 (for a regular fireplace). Depending on the region, these consumer estimates of value are low, according to a National Association of Realtors study that found fireplaces have a positive effect on the selling price of a home, adding about 12 percent to the value.

“While fireplaces and other hearth products of the past were widely used for ambiance, many of today’s hearth products are very energy efficient and can help cut energy bills,” said Goldman. “With today’s products, consumers can have good looks, ambiance and a highly efficient heating device all in one.”

Use and General Hearth Statistics

People that have fireplaces and stoves in their homes use them. The survey reported fireplace owners typically use their fireplaces 32 times per year, most often in the winter (average 22 times)

and fall (average 6 times). Stove owners are even more dedicated, using them an average of 108 times per year, with the highest usage also in the winter (57 times) and fall (25 times).

Other highlights from the latest HPBA survey include:

- In 2005, the U.S. hearth industry sold a total of 3.2 million cordwood, gas, pellet and electric hearth appliances, an increase of eight percent from the prior year; since 1998, shipments of hearth appliances have increased 36 percent.
- 80 percent of U.S. homes that have a hearth appliance feature one fireplace or stove; 17 percent feature two such appliances; and three percent have three or more fireplaces or stoves.
- Consumers consider fireplaces to be more of a design feature, while a freestanding stove is used primarily for heat.
- More than three-quarters of cordwood fireplace owners have never considered converting it to burn natural gas or propane. Of those that have switched, the most popular reason is the ease and convenience of gas appliances (83 percent).
- Natural gas is the fuel of choice among both gas fireplace owners (85 percent) and gas stove owners (79 percent), with propane a distant second.
- The average cordwood fireplace in U.S. homes has been in use for 23 years, while the average age of a fireplace insert is 13 years. The average gas fireplace was installed 11 years ago, as was the average freestanding stove.
- People use freestanding stoves for an average of 4.8 hours at a time; fireplace inserts 4 hours; cordwood fireplaces 3.6 hours; and gas fireplaces 2.6 hours.
- The typical fireplace is located in a living room (57 percent) or family room (45 percent). A living room also is the most popular location (38 percent) for a freestanding stove, as is a kitchen (28 percent) and family room (23 percent).
- Sixty percent of consumers who have modified their fireplace to make it more energy efficient did so by installing a fireplace insert. Cordwood inserts were most popular (63 percent), followed by gas inserts (37 percent).

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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.**