

Viessmann boilers – Pat Lillie

Pat Lillie from Viessmann spoke about condensing modulating boilers. He started with a question “When you hear Viessmann, what comes to mind?” Two words rang out, quality and expensive. Well, that was no surprise, I can’t recall ever hearing quality and cheap in the same breath. Viessmann was founded in 1917 and remains a family run business today. Let’s focus on the gas, condensing, modulating boilers for this article. Their boiler model numbering system has to do with bells and whistles, not efficiency. So a model 100, the entry-level model is not less efficient than the 300, it simply has fewer features.

A hallmark of the Viessmann product is titanium stainless steel heat exchangers. One thing to note, they do not want PVC vents for combustion gas, only polypropylene or stainless steel. Another installation feature to note, they require neutralizer on the condensate. I called the city of Boston plumbing inspector and he said that neutralizer depends on a few things: the PH level that the equipment puts out and the ph level that the community allows. The manufacturer will indicate what the ph levels are for that piece of equipment and have installation instructions that address this. Boiler condensate is more acidic than furnace condensate.

Pat did a great job explaining the condensing modulating concept, here goes: like a car in cruise control, the car is working to maintain a set speed, whether going up a hill, down or on the level. The car is modulating itself to maintain speed. A modulating boiler is doing the same thing. Rather than having drops in temperature and big pushes to get the heat up, firing up a cold boiler, it is working to maintain the heat, not suddenly generate it. So what flies in the face of our sense of efficiency and limiting waste (whether real or imagined) is that long runs of baseboards and a boiler always working, is more efficient. Maybe we can add a sprinter and a marathon runner analogy here just to mix it up!

Recommend service once a year, keep it simple with the homeowner. Boilers are working hard so even the best equipment should get the once over.

The combi heat and hot water set-ups do the following: They share the same circulating water so only one is working at any given moment. A good installation prioritizes the hot water. So this is how it works, while the shower is running the heat is off, throw in a load of wash, the heat is off, run the dishwasher and the heat is off. Realistically how much of a problem is that, not sure, but that is the process.

Viessmann is clearly working for efficiency, Pat conveyed enthusiasm for the product and the company, and as always, it is the heating industry that keeps us on our toes!

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