



TIPS FROM TECHNICAL SERVICE

Flood-Damaged Appliances Warning

GAMA REMINDS VICTIMS OF HURRICANES: FLOOD-DAMAGED APPLIANCES SHOULD BE REPLACED

Arlington, Virginia, August 30, 2005—With flooding in a number of states as the result of Hurricane Katrina, it is important to remember that all flood-damaged plumbing, heating, cooling and electrical appliances and related systems should be replaced, rather than repaired. This warning was issued today by GAMA, the national trade association representing manufacturers of appliances, components and related products used in space heating and water heating, commercial food service and power generation. The association also recommended that all work on flooded equipment be performed by a qualified, licensed contractor, not by homeowners.

The GAMA warning stems from past reports of accidents resulting from improper do-it-yourself repairs of flood-damaged appliances. One homeowner, for example, suffered severe burns in a flash fire that occurred when he tried to re-light the pilot on his flooded gas water heater. The association stresses that not only gas equipment is at risk but also units using oil or electricity as the energy source.

“Controls damaged by floodwaters are extremely dangerous,” notes GAMA President Evan R. Gaddis. “Attempts to use equipment with defective gas or oil control devices can result in fires, flashbacks or explosions. And in the case of electrical appliances, the result can be injury or even death from a powerful electric shock.” The GAMA official noted that devices at risk include water heaters, furnaces, boilers, room heaters and air conditioners.

The association stresses that the repair of flooded appliances and related systems (including damaged venting and electrical connections) is not a job for the do-it-yourselfer, no matter how skilled. This is particularly true of control valves, according to the GAMA official. These components are manufactured to extremely close tolerances. Once submerged in floodwaters, they must be replaced. Field repairs should never be attempted by the homeowner.

Even when controls appear to be operative, the unit should not be used after floodwaters recede. “It may work for a while,” Mr. Gaddis explains, “but it will deteriorate over time.”

“It might take a week, a month or even a year, but once any control has been under water it presents a serious hazard...fire or explosion in the case of gas controls, fire or shock in the case of electric equipment.”

Because so many things can go wrong as a result of floodwaters, it’s usually cheaper, and always safer, to replace rather than repair, Mr. Gaddis said. “You can have a control valve replaced but there may be damage to other parts of the unit, like venting, piping, burners and insulation. There are just so many things that can go wrong, the wise choice is always to start over with new equipment,” GAMA’s president declared.

In some instances, government aid may be available to help consumers finance the replacement of flood-damaged heating equipment. For information, homeowners should contact any of the offices of the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), set up to help flood victims.

Established in 1935 and headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, GAMA represents manufacturers of appliances, components and related products used in space conditioning, water heating, commercial food service and power generation. In addition to gas-fired appliances, GAMA’s scope includes certain oil-fired and electrical appliances. GAMA member companies account for more than 90 percent of U.S. sales of gas and oil-fired space heating equipment and gas, oil and electric water heaters. GAMA also represents manufacturers of equipment used in the production, transmission and distribution of fuel gases. GAMA’s membership reaches beyond the United States to include companies in Canada, Japan, Europe and Australia.

Credit: www.gamanet.org