

How Not To Go Into The Tank

A Brief and Basic Guide to Hot Water Heater Maintenance and Replacement

Along with death and taxes, one of the things you can be sure of in your lifetime is that you will need to replace your hot water heater.

Far too often, the end comes as a great and unpleasant surprise.

Suddenly, you find your unit has been inundated by a flood caused by failure, due to corrosion, of a continuously fed tank. The tank will release anywhere from 25 to 120 gallons, for starters. Count on the damage being extensive, not only to your unit and your belongings, but to adjacent units within the building. Insurance companies pay out thousands of homeowner claims each year for damage done by leaking or bursting water heaters. The companies estimate that water damage accounts for 65% of these property damage claims. ***But a water heater reaching the end of its useful life doesn't have to be an expensive or traumatic event.***



Simple visual inspections can provide advance warning of trouble ahead.

Start a simple maintenance routine. Look at your water heater once a month or so, keeping an eye out for damp spots or rust around the bottom of the tank or corrosion of the top elements. If you see any, it's time to call management to arrange for a replacement. ***When compared to the cost of a new one, repairing a corroding or leaking water heater is almost never economical.***



Sometimes you don't get any warning signs ... what to do.

Every so often a heater will suddenly burst or leak without warning. One of the things you can do *to minimize damage* is to install a catch pan with a drain connected to a waste line or sump pump to remove the leaking water. In any case, you should also know exactly where the shut-off valve is in case you have to cut the heater off from the main water supply in a hurry.

Automatic Shut Off Valves keep damage to an absolute minimum.

In addition, Automatic Shut Off Valves (ASOV) can be fitted to most heaters. When the sensor that works with the valve detects a leak, the water supply is automatically shut off. If you use gas, ASOV's that shut off the both the gas and water supply are available. Some insurance companies will offer a discount if an ASOV is in place. In addition, you can install a water alarm. It won't prevent damage, but it will sound an alert if there is a leak.



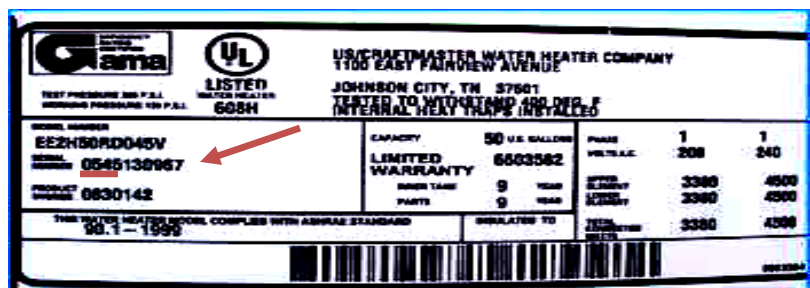
Age is the determining factor.

The life span of a water heater is typically five to seven years. A good clue to the life expectancy of your heater is the manufacturer's warranty. In most cases, ten years is as long a warranty as you can get, most manufacturers offer less. It's a good idea to check that warranty, if you still have it. You can determine the age of your heater by looking at the serial number sticker on the side.

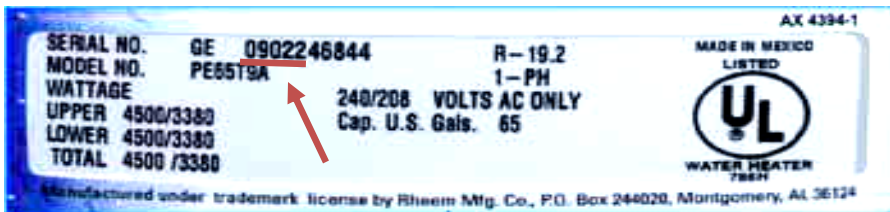
Photo and Serial Number sticker on Water Heater

To find the date of manufacture, you simply need to know what format each manufacturer uses. Although there are variations, the first few digits of the serial number will usually denote the date of manufacture. Find your manufacturer below to decode the age of your water heater:

AMERICAN / CRAFTMASTER / WHIRLPOOL
American Water Heater Company markets their line under several names, including Craft Master, Whirlpool, etc. They use a "YEAR / WEEK" format. The first two digits are the year, the second two are for the week of the year. Our picture here shows that this heater was made in the 45th week of 2005.

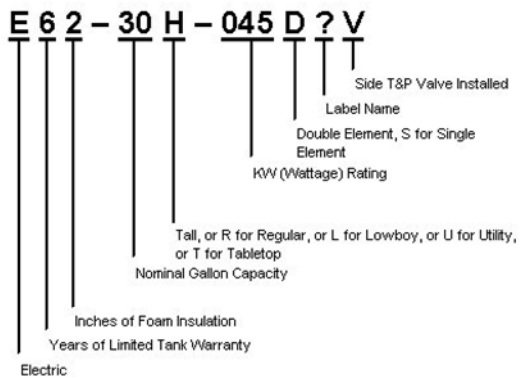


RHEEM / RUUD / GE water heaters use the MONTH then YEAR format. In our picture here, you will note that the first 4 numbers of the serial number are "0902", which indicates September (9th month) of 2002.

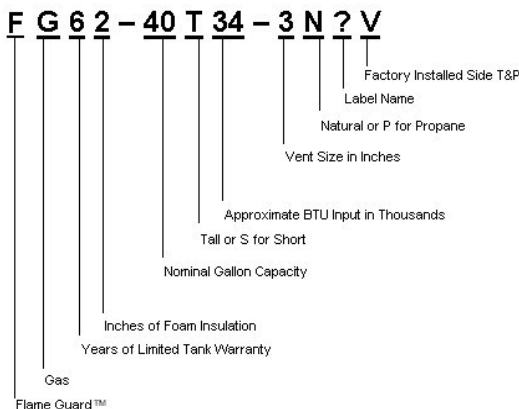


Also you can check the model number information to gauge useful life

Residential Electric Product Model Number Key



Residential Gas Product Model Number Key



Choosing a water heater:

Tank systems

With a tank system you have a choice of tank sizes, from 25 to 120 gallon capacity. The size of your family and their needs and habits and the number of bathrooms you have should be the determining factor. For gas or electric heaters, a good rule of thumb is the number of bathrooms.

Optimal Gas and Electric Tank Sizes

- 1 Bath: 30 – 40 gallons (gas or electric)
- 1.5 Baths: 40 gallons minimum
- 2 – 3.5 Baths: 50 gallons (gas) / 80 gallons electric
- 4 Baths (or extra large tub): 75 gallons (gas) / 120 gallons (electric).

Tankless Systems

Another option is a tankless system. It delivers hot water on demand. Tankless systems can work on electric, gas or oil. Essentially, they're heaters that respond when you turn on the tap. You can use one larger unit at the water source for your unit or several smaller tankless heaters near individual taps (kitchen, bathrooms, etc). A tankless system needs the tap to run a bit before it delivers hot water. A system with a tank takes less time to deliver hot water, but you pay for keeping that hot water on hand. The upfront cost of a tankless system is high, but tankless systems save a great deal of energy and a great deal of money over the long run and they take up much less space.

If you have any questions, call the Pyramid Maintenance department at **203.348.8566, ext.133** or email us at maintenance@pyramidregroup.com. We'll be happy to take a look, give you a professional opinion of the condition your heater and a fixed-price quote for a replacement to give you peace of mind.

