



## Ken Field

Owner of Slate Belt Energy Services

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

### Neatness Counts

Sloppy people say that neatness doesn't matter as long as the equipment works. I'm not a neat freak but I live with one so I know how they think. I'm in that middle ground where things need to be straight, and plumb, and level and I like making the best use of space possible. I also love making things convenient for maintenance people and homeowners alike. It's amazing what little it takes to make things convenient. The time to make things convenient is when new equipment is being installed. Some of the things I like are already required by the building code but are never done. A light installed near the equipment, a switch readily accessible and the ability to remove the air filter without having to bend it in half are all no-brainers but someone skips those amenities on every job. I see photos proudly posted by contractors on Facebook all the time and of course I get blocked because I point out the shortcomings of their work. If that makes me a bad person, then so be it. They should learn and grow from it. I post photos of my work and although I could not think of a single thing anyone could find to make it cleaner, neater or more functional, I'm always ready for that discussion.

A substantial number of heating and air conditioning systems are installed in the attic in our area and the only way to get there is through the house. When I see the sloppy work in the attic I can only wonder if the people that did it treated the living space the same way. There are old parts and drink bottles and all kinds of scrap spread all over these attics. That's what makes me wonder if they used dropcloths to cover the floors and shoe covers to keep the house clean or did they just run through like a herd of buffalo. Usually when a homeowner sees me or one of my crew stop at the doorstep and put shoe covers on, they make a comment that they've never seen anyone do that before. Wow, who invites someone into their home and just lets them run roughshod over the carpets?

Some of the newer heat pumps have some very detailed requirements for starting up a system. Not to mention the precision that is required to make some of the connections. I worry about the longevity of these systems when I see the work surrounding them. Time will tell.

Ken Field is the owner of Slate Belt Energy and Field's Service, Inc. As a certified energy rater and contractor, he is qualified to assess every aspect of energy usage and prescribe solutions to save energy. He can be reached at 610-759-6306 or email Ken@FieldsService.com



June 11<sup>th</sup> from 9:00AM to 2:00PM

Rain Date June 18<sup>th</sup>

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Vendor Information: Ray 610-599-0010

### EPA Qualified Outdoor Wood Furnaces

#### A new generation of clean

When John Hanley built his 4,000 square foot log home in a small Ohio township 17 years ago, he chose propane for heat and domestic hot water because it was an economical choice.

But, when propane prices increased and his annual fuel bill reached \$6000, he dropped the thermostat to 63°F to manage his costs. His wife, however, suffered with severe arthritis and lowering the ambient temperature caused her discomfort. He began looking for a more affordable home heating solution. His research led him to outdoor wood furnaces.

Today's outdoor wood furnaces, also called wood boilers or wood-fired hydronic heaters are a clean, cost-effective alternative to the safety, mess and health concerns of indoor wood burning, while also providing a ready supply of domestic hot water.

The outdoor furnace heats water in an insulated water jacket surrounding the firebox. The heated water circulates through underground pipes to a forced-air furnace, boiler or radiant floor heating system that distributes even, adjustable and comfortable heat.

Hanley knew some townships placed restrictions on the installation of outdoor wood furnaces to address smoke emission issues. It was important for him to set a good example in his own community

by choosing a unit that was EPA qualified. Central Boiler, an American-owned company in business since 1984, helped create the EPA Hydronic Heater Program. Their E-Classic was the first outdoor wood furnace meeting Phase 2 of the program. Central Boiler's new E-Classic models utilize a three-stage gasification technology and a self-regulating thermostatically controlled system that burns wood so completely that combustion efficiencies approach 100%. This means the owner burns less wood, with very little residual ash and virtually no smoke. By minimizing the emissions, this cleaner generation of outdoor furnaces is the optimum choice for people concerned with the environment.

Hanley chose an E-Classic to heat a 2,500 square foot barn/garage in addition to his home and hot water. Now, Hanley's wife keeps the ambient house temperature at 76°F. "She's happy and she has endless hot water for her whirlpool bath," he says.

Company reliability was also a factor in his choice. "Central Boiler stands behind their products and this sort of warranty service is really important to me."

Finally, because he cuts his own wood, he has eliminated his home heating costs enabling him to redirect the money saved to their children's university educations.

"This furnace is the way to go. You can't beat it," says Hanley.



In 2002, concerns regarding smoke emissions from outdoor wood furnaces prompted a number of manufacturers to form the Outdoor Furnace Manufacturers Caucus and ultimately partner voluntarily with the EPA to create a program that gave homeowners choices for cleaner, more efficient models. EPA states that outdoor hydronic heaters that are EPA Phase 2 program qualified are 90% cleaner than unqualified units.



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