



Advice and guidance on using Wood Pellets

Wood Pellets Systems are simple and reliable when set up correctly. However these systems are still new within the UK, and many boiler manufacturers, installers, suppliers and users of pellets are developing their experience and expertise.

We thought it would be useful if we pulled together a list of some of the things we have witnessed that have caused problems or difficulties when getting used to handling this material. This is not meant to be a comprehensive guide, but hopefully might give you a few hints that will help you install and run your systems properly.

1. Installation and running of Pellet Boilers

These are expensive items of equipment, and you need to do plenty of research before selecting the right make. Often the more expensive versions are more sophisticated, and may come from continental manufacturers who have been building these boilers for longer, so may still represent good value in the long term. However, there are also a number of relatively simple boilers which are cheaper and very effective.

However it also the case that some boilers are set up to burn the material as hot as can be achieved, in order to gain the maximum efficiency of combustion. While this is desirable, it can on occasions cause the ash to fuse together (clinker) rather than break apart, eventually blocking the boiler. This situation can also be exacerbated if the pellet fuel has any bark or silicates in it. The first remedy is to discuss with the boiler installer whether the temperature settings or air mixture is appropriate. If this does not provide a remedy, then we can look at supplying you other types of fuel to see if that can help.

We have come across boilers that people have treated as if it was a gas appliance – ie left alone, other than maybe an annual service. These are essentially a solid fuel system, and as such should be inspected by the owner on a regular basis – and given a basic clean out if possible – and serviced reasonably frequently. Obviously you should take advice from your installer about what can and can not be done – but most systems are not best left alone completely!

Again, with a gas or oil system, we are very used to boosting the heating maybe twice a day for short periods, and then switching off. This is not the best approach with a pellet boiler, which works better if it can run at a consistent level 24 hours a day. This can prevent the ash cooling and solidifying, and avoids the high temperatures caused by boosting the system. Keeping a heating system on for 12 hours at a consistent warm temperature is not necessarily less energy efficient than having it on full boost for three hours on and nine off.