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Re: Docket Number EERE-2014-BT-STD-0036

Statement by Theodore E. (Rett) Rasmussen III, President

Good morning. I am Rett Rasmussen, President of Rasmussen Iron Works, Inc., also known as Rasmussen Gas Logs & Grills. We are a five-generation family business, founded in 1907. We have been manufacturing gas log sets since 1958, infrared gas grills since 2000 and distributing radiant patio heaters since 2011.

There is no monolithic “Hearth Product”. The similarity between the products in our industry start and end with their consumption of gas. Lumping them together is ambiguous, overbroad and unworkable as a definition. We submitted comments on this definition last year. Why didn’t DOE give us an improved definition to comment on in this NOPR?

Gas logs are also not a monolithic product. There are countless variations in the sizes of fireplaces, with differences in the front width, rear width, depth, opening height, gas line location, number of openings and all combinations of these different factors. Gas log sets are retrofit appliances to this vast variety of fireplace sizes, restrictions and combinations. If there were a “one size fits all” gas log set, my life would be easier. But there is no such solution. Accordingly, gas log sets are designed to meet the market for these vast combinations. Some manufacturers focus on the “sweet spot” of sizes, 18” to 30” widths, but Rasmussen, as a specialty manufacturer, offers standard solutions up to 96”, and custom solutions for large and unusual fireplaces, with a variety of safety control systems.

Adding an EIS to a gas log set presents a very challenging proposition. It is not as easy as merely replacing the safety pilot control valve as the NOPR suggests. EIS components are greater in number (valve, control module, wiring, battery pack or transformer) and greater in size than those for a standing pilot. Gas log sets are not constructed as part of an entire enclosure, like gas fireplaces. Gas log manufacturers

do not have the voids in the sides or under the floor of the fireplace in which to hide the EIS components. Accordingly, unless the installation is part of a new construction or extensive remodel (both of which are very small proportions of gas log sales) and the components can be installed outside of but adjacent to the firebox, the EIS components must be installed in the firebox along with the gas log set. Unfortunately, EIS components are also more heat-sensitive than those of a standing pilot system, further complicating the location-of-components issue. If not located properly, the components could become damaged from the heat, potentially creating a safety hazard.

A further issue with EIS is that they require outside power to operate. Since it is highly unusual for a wood-burning fireplace to have a 120-volt receptacle installed inside of it, batteries must be used to power the functions of the EIS. Unfortunately, batteries are also very heat-sensitive, discharging at temperatures below that which adversely affect the EIS components. Again, it is very challenging to include these large components while maintaining the aesthetically pleasing decorative effect of gas logs.

This NOPR would severely reduce our ability to provide solutions for 36” and larger set sizes. The Electronic Ignition controls are the least developed systems in the hearth industry. Battery-powered electronic ignition systems with variable flame height remote control (a feature many people desire), is only available with a gas capacity that allows their use in 30” and smaller set sizes. Currently, for these larger sets, there is only one safety control solution for installation inside the firebox, and that is the millivolt safety control. The only EIS solution is furnace controls that must be installed outside of the firebox and require 120v electricity. They are only available with ON/OFF control – no remote flame modulation. My quest for over a dozen years in every conversation I have with gas control manufacturers is that they produce a high BTU capacity battery-powered electronic ignition system with variable flame height remote control. But they have always told me that they just don’t anticipate sufficient sales volume to warrant their extensive costs of design, testing, certification, tooling, marketing and other costs. You see, gas log manufacturers only have available to us safety control systems that have been made for other products and industries of greater sales volume but, unfortunately, lesser BTU flow than what the larger fireplaces need for gas log sets. Accordingly, eliminating the millivolt safety control will severely lessen the utility of my products for larger fireplaces, limiting them to match lighted natural gas, extensive remodels and new construction, all of which would result in a virtual elimination of this category for my company.

I do not see that the TSD has taken into account the cost of annually replacing batteries over the life of the gas log set, which greatly reduces the economic benefit of switching to electronic ignition.

DOE has determined that 90 manufacturers would be impacted, and that 66 of these are US-based Small Businesses, those with fewer than 500 employees. I know of only two large manufacturers in this industry, only one of which is US based? Who are the other 22 large businesses?

The Hearth Products industry is a small family business industry, including not just the manufacturers but the distributors and retailers who sell these products to the consumer. This NOPR strikes at the heart of free enterprise, which DOE admits. On Page 7115, Table V.8 projects up to a 58% decrease in production workers as a result of this standard. Ouch! How about we cut out 58% of DOE's workers and contractors? Might that evince a bit of empathy from DOE on the impact of this proposal?

I also agree with the NOPR on Page 7116, which states that the Manufacturer Product Costs for gas log sets are likely to see a greater increase than for other products, resulting in declining consumer demand and negative impacts on gas log manufacturer profitability.

I also agree with the NOPR on Page 7125 that larger manufacturers will have a competitive advantage due to their size, and that this proposed standard would have a significant impact on a substantial number of small businesses.

A dealer of mine in Michigan wanted me to be sure to read you this: "Rett, please let Washington know that in the northern states the pilot, which costs about \$3 a month to run, actually keeps the cold air and moisture out of the fireplace box. Without a standing pilot, the fireplace is allowed to get cold, and the cold actually travels through the glass or screen, and makes the room cold. The furnace kicks on fully, which uses up any savings from not running the pilot. Also, animals and insects nest in the flues and venting, which creates a potential hazard for fire and carbon monoxide back up with the blockage. This could potentially hurt or kill people, and cause damage property. Pilots reduce the chance of this occurring."

Lastly, gas log sets are also an excellent source of emergency warmth in the case of a power outage. In areas where electric heat pumps are the primary source of heat, consumers would be cold and dark during ice storms and hurricanes that knock out

power lines, except for their gas log sets. Bill from Maryland wrote to me "Our power was knocked out yesterday evening by hurricane Sandy and we used our Rasmussen unit today to stay warm and even do a little cooking – it was a big help to have the unit which didn't need electricity to operate." Not so for many if this NOPR is adopted.

This proposed rule will have negative impact on the safety, well-being and choice of consumers, as well as the financial and employment health of many small businesses. I respectfully request that gas log sets be excluded from a Final Rule.

Thank you for the opportunity to present to you. I welcome any questions.