

# Gas logs heat a room, not a home

Dear Mr. Energy,

Are gas logs an energy efficient way to heat my home in winter? I'm thinking about installing some, but I don't want to waste my money.

— *Want to be Warm and Toasty*

## ASK Mr. ENERGY

Dear Warm and Toasty,

There are two basic types of gas logs on the market today: ventless gas logs and vented gas logs. Ventless gas logs are 100 percent energy efficient but they're also dangerous: they emit carbon monoxide and nitrous oxide into your home. In fact, most package directions say to actually use ventless gas logs use with a window or damper open — a vent — which negates the energy efficiency inherent to the product. A vent creates an updraft that draws heat out of your home and pulls cold air through any air leaks you may have.

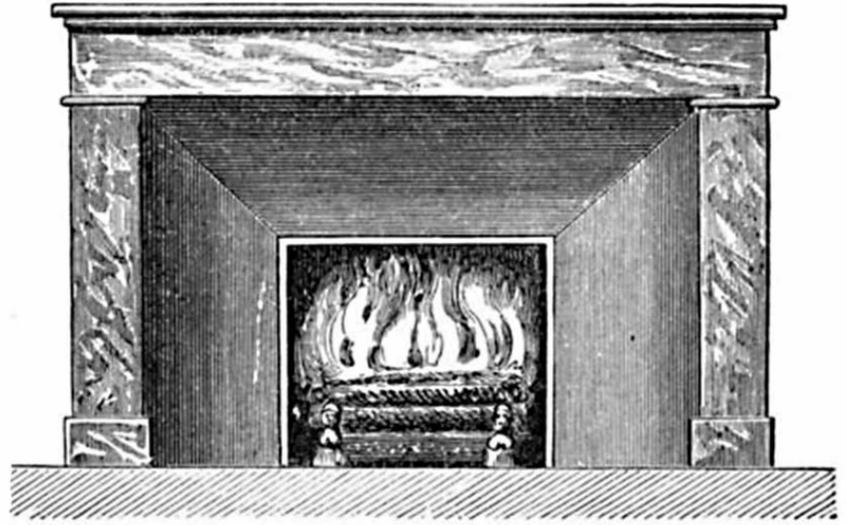
Vented gas logs include the kind that vents through a chimney or an installed vent, drawing air from your home, or sealed combustion/direct vent gas logs. Vented gas logs are a

safer option, but some types also require the chimney damper be open, again creating an updraft. This is not energy efficient at all. The best way to go, in my opinion, is sealed combustion, or direct vent gas logs. This is a sealed unit that has air intake and air exhaust built in, as well as a built-in blower to circulate air around the unit. The air inside the home does not mix with the air inside the unit, so there's no danger of carbon monoxide or other gases infiltrating the home. You'll get the ambiance of a fireplace and

the energy efficiency of gas logs, but with none of the safety issues of ventless logs.

As far as money-saving or money-wasting goes, gas logs are mainly used to heat one room at a time, not the whole house. So if your goal is to have a warm and toasty living room with all the ambiance that a fire brings to a space, then go for the gas logs. But if you want the cheapest way possible to keep your whole house warm, then gas logs are not the solution.

*Mr. Energy is a collaborative effort by Adrienne and Mark Bashista, owners of Home Performance NC, an energy auditing and home weatherization company. For information, [www.homeperformancenc.com](http://www.homeperformancenc.com) or 919.360.1570.*



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