

KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

In-sink water heater more efficient than teapot

Dear Jim: We drink quite a bit of hot tea at our home year-round. I now keep a small electric pot of water hot all day. Would it be more energy efficient to install a sink-type hot water dispenser?

—Lori H.

Dear Lori: Keeping a small electric pot of water hot all day is not the most energy-efficient method for making tea. During the winter, the heat lost from the pot helps to heat the house, but the electric-resistance element in the pot is expensive to operate.

In summer, this pot of hot water is a triple loss. First, it uses electricity to heat the water. Second, your air conditioner must run more to remove this heat from the house. Third, the hot water gives off humidity to the room, which makes the air conditioner run even longer.

A sink-mounted hot water dispenser is a much more efficient method to get hot water instantly for tea or coffee. There also are many other uses for the instant hot water, such as warming baby food, cleaning cheese or butter off a knife, etc. Running a little hot water over a new jar often makes it easier to



**James
Dulley**
Opinion

break open the seal on the lid.

A hot-water dispenser is different from an instant water heater which heats the cold water as it is used. Instead, a hot water dispenser has a small, highly insulated hot water tank under the countertop. In effect, it is an efficient mini-water heater in the kitchen. Its insulated tank ensures very little heat is lost to the kitchen, conserving electricity.

A typical hot water dispenser can heat enough hot water for about 50 cups each hour. This is more than most families will ever use. For better-tasting water, some models include optional water filters. Another option is a countertop model that uses bottled water; it may also include a chiller for cold water.

You should be able to install a hot water dispenser yourself, because it operates on just standard 120-volt electricity. The

most difficult part of the installation process is making a hole in the countertop. Depending on your needs, the water temperature can usually be set between 140 and 190 degrees. The lower temperature settings are ideal for cleaning tasks.

If you have children who can reach the hot water dispenser handle, select a model with a child-resistant pushbutton. A typical design requires a 90-degree turn of the button to switch it from the locked-off position. Even 140-degree water can scald skin in seconds, so always lock it.

Hot water can leach lead from pipe solder joints, so all the water paths in hot-water dispensers are lead-free. When steaming rice or boiling vegetables on the stove, it is safe to start with heated water from the dispenser. This will save energy overall.

The following companies offer hot-water dispensers: Anaheim Manufacturing, (800) 854-3229, www.anahelmmfg.com; Elkay, (630) 574-8484, www.elkay.com; Franke, (800) 626-3771, www.frankeksd.com; In-Sink-

Erator, (800) 558-5700, www.in-sinkerator.com; and Tri Palm International, (800) 646-2747, www.oasiswatercoolers.com.

Dear Jim: I called two window companies to check my old windows for possible repairs or to give me a quote on new ones. The company charges \$100 to come out, but it will refund the charge if I buy windows. Is this normal?

—Vicki S.

Dear Vicki: With today's slowing business environment, I am surprised to hear any company would charge you to give a quotation on installing replacement windows. Perhaps they thought it was just a service call.

Call several more window contractors and tell them you want quotes on new windows and also on repairs. I am sure many will come out for free. Do some research ahead so they cannot push you needlessly into new windows when the old ones can be repaired.

Questions may be sent to James Dulley, Kalamazoo Gazette, 6906 Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45244 or via www.dulley.com.