

11. Fireplaces

1. Definition of Category

Fireplaces using firewood, etc. as fuel and also fireplaces using gas or electricity to generate heat (hereinafter referred to as “firewood fireplaces,” “gas fireplaces,” and “electric fireplaces,” respectively.)

HS Numbers	Commodity
<Firewood fireplaces> 7321.83	Fireplaces, ranges, and similar domestic appliances (non electrical), of iron or steel, solid fuel
7321.90	Fireplaces, ranges, and similar domestic appliances (non electrical), of iron or steel, solid fuel
<Gas fireplaces> 7321.81	Non electrical domestic appliances, iron or steel, gas or gas and other fuel
7321.82	Non electrical domestic appliances, iron or steel, liquid fuel
<Electric fireplaces> 8516.79	Electrical heating appliances, etc.

Note: There is no major functional difference between fireplaces and stoves. The terms merely indicate differences in shape (see 6. Product Characteristics). Therefore, in this guidebook, stoves that function as fireplaces are treated as "fireplaces."

2. Import Trends

(1) Recent Trends in Fireplace Imports

There are no statistics on the value or quantity of imports of the fireplaces handled in this guidebook. During the bubble economy, which ended in 1991, sales reached more than 10,000 units a year, but have now settled at around the 7,000-unit level. Viewed by the source of heat, there are few gas or electric type fireplaces imported - only about 1,000 units a year. The remainder is all firewood fireplaces. Note that some importers have not joined any industrial associations. Judging from the state of distribution in the market, however, only a small number of fireplaces are handled by these importers.

(2) Imports by Place of Origin

While there are no statistics on the countries of origin of imported fireplaces, industry sources report that the main suppliers of firewood fireplaces are Sweden, Norway and other Scandinavian countries, Canada and the United States. Fireplaces are also being imported, though in small quantities, from Belgium, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. As opposed to this, gas fireplaces are being currently imported from just the United States. All of the electric fireplaces are being imported from the United Kingdom.

(3) Imports' Market Share in Japan

While the exact share of imports in the domestic market is not clear, imports are believed to account for over 90% of the market.

3. Key Considerations related to Importing

(1) Regulations and Procedural Requirements at the Time of Importation

There are no legal regulations governing imports of fireplaces.

(2) Regulations and Procedural Requirements at the Time of Sale

The sale and installation of fireplaces are subject to the following laws and other regulations by type of heat sources.

<Firewood fireplaces>

Firewood fireplaces may be freely sold. There are, however, restrictions as to the places of installation under the Building Standard Law, the Fire Service Law. Some local governments have their own fire regulations such as the Fire Prevention Act as well.

1) Building Standard Law

When installing fireplaces in general homes, rooms where they are installed must be built with noncombustible materials or semi noncombustible materials (except at the highest floor), etc. Sometimes built-in type fireplaces must have their exhaust conduits and other structural features reinforced in order to be installed in conformance with provisions of the Law, even if they are compliant with standards of the exporter nation.

In June of 1998, the Building Standard Law underwent its first major amendments for the first time in some fifty years. The key amended provisions were the addition of performance standards along with the former specification standards, and the opening up of building confirmation and inspection procedures to the private sector. For more information, please consult with building officials of local government or designated confirmation and inspection organization.

2) Fire Prevention Act

Article 9 of the Fire Prevention Act stipulates that built-in type heaters are subject to provisions of local fire safety ordinances. These ordinances may restrict installation locations or require minimum separation from flammable objects. Some ordinances also impose additional regulations on exhaust conduits (chimneys).

<Gas fireplaces>

The sale of gas fireplaces is subject to the restrictions of the Gas Utility Industry or the Law Concerning the Securing of Safety and Optimization of Transaction of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (hereinafter referred to as the LP Gas Law). At the time of installation, like with firewood fireplaces, regulations on place of installation, etc. must be complied with.

1) Gas Utility Industry Law, LP Gas Law

Fireplaces using city gas are subject to the restrictions of the Gas Utility Industry Law and fireplaces using LP gas are subject to the restrictions of the LP Gas Law. An October 2000 amendment provided for makers of gas appliances to conduct confirmation testing for technical compliance on their own, and mandated that gas appliances display a stipulated mark of compliance on product labeling (see 4. Labeling). However, certain gas appliances are designated as “specific gas appliances” because they pose a greater risk of fire due to structure, usage conditions or usage patterns. These appliances must still undergo compliance testing by a third-party testing organization.

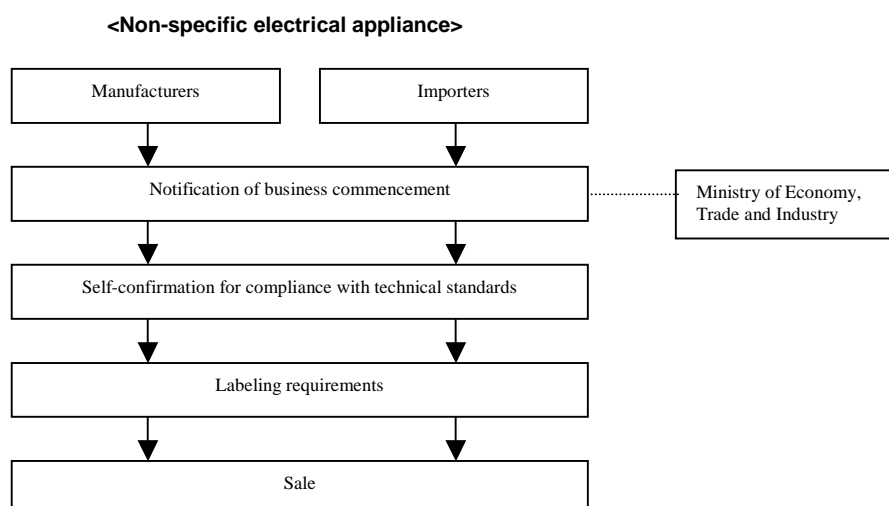
<Electric fireplaces>

The sale of electric fireplaces is subject to provisions of the Electrical Appliance and Material Safety Law. At the time of installation, like with other type of fireplaces, regulations on place of installation, etc. must be complied with.

1) Electrical Appliance and Material Safety Law

Electric fireplaces are subject to provisions of the Electrical Appliance and Material Safety Law. Manufacturer or importer shall undertake in-house testing, and be obligated to conform to technical standards through self-confirmation. In order to substantiate post control in line with the abolishment of prior control, any products that are not compliant with the technical standards are subject to improvement orders or are prevented from displaying particular labels. When deemed necessary, products with a high level of danger or trouble shall be imposed to the violation of the order.

When selling electric fireplaces that are designated as non-specific electrical appliances, manufacturers or importers must confirm on their own that their products are compliant with technical standards, and must display required label items and PS mark on the product. (see 4. Labeling) Also, importers must file a notification of business commencement by each type classification with the Director-General of the competent Bureau of Economic, Trade and Industry (or with Minister of Economic, Trade and Industry in case of multiple business sites) within 30 days of commencing import operations. Importers are also required to prepare and maintain self-testing records.

Fig. 1 Procedures required under the Electrical Appliance and Material Safety Law

(3) Competent Agencies

- Building Standard Law
Building Guidance Division, Housing Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport
TEL: 03-5253-8111 <http://www.mlit.go.jp>
- Fire Service Law / Fire Prevention Act
Fire Prevention Division, Fire and Disaster Management Agency, Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications
TEL: 03-5574-7111 <http://www.fdma.go.jp>
Fire defense agencies of individual prefecture level governments
- Gas Utility Industry Law / LP Gas Law
Industrial Safety Division, Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, Agency for Natural Resources and Energy
TEL: 03-3501-1511 <http://www.enecho.go.jp>
- Electrical Appliance and Material Safety Law
Product Safety Division, Consumer Affairs Department, Commerce and Information Policy Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry
TEL: 03-3501-1511 <http://www.meti.go.jp>

4. Labeling

(1) Legally Required Labeling

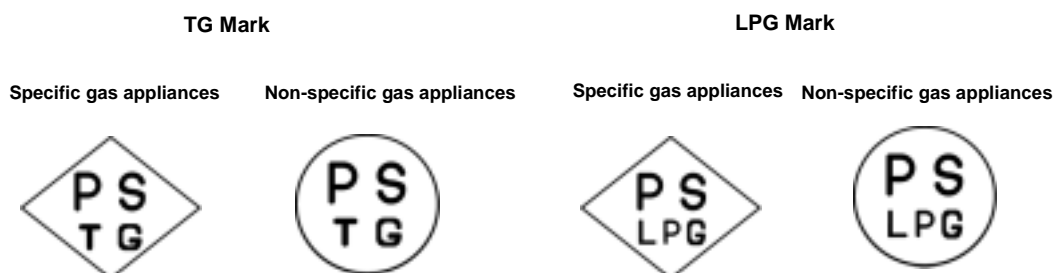
<Firewood fireplaces>

There is no legally required labeling for firewood fireplaces.

<Gas fireplaces>

1) Gas Utility Industry Law, LP Gas Law

Semi-sealed type gas fireplaces have been designated as “specific gas appliances,” while sealed type, outdoor use type, and open-type gas fireplaces have been designated as “non-specific gas appliances.”



<Electric fireplaces>

Electric fireplaces must be labeled with rated voltage, current, frequency, name of the manufacturer, and PSE mark, as required under the Electrical Appliance and Material Safety Law.

Example of Labeling Under the Electrical Appliance and Material Safety Law

<Non-specific electrical appliance>

Rated voltage:	100V
Rated power consumption:	30W
Rated frequency:	50 /60 Hz
XX Manufacturing Co.	



(2) Voluntary Labeling based on Provisions of Law

1) Industrial Standardization Law (JIS Mark)

There are JIS standards for gas fireplaces (gas stoves) (JIS S2122) and electric fireplaces (electric stoves) (JIS C9202). Fireplaces that comply with Japan Industrial Standards (JIS standards) may display the JIS Mark in their product labels. Manufacturing facilities that pass a certification review by the competent government Minister are allowed to display the JIS Mark on all products made at those facilities. For more information on the JIS standards, contact:

- Japanese Standards Association TEL: 03-3583-8005

JIS Mark



<http://www.jsa.or.jp>

(3) Voluntary Industry Labeling

1) Warning label

The Japan Fireplace and Stove Association has a warning label, which its member firms attach to all of their products to provide the consumer with safety information.

Contacts:

- Japan Fireplace and Stove Association
TEL: 0474-45-9506 <http://www.jfsa.gr.jp>

Warning label



2) Gas appliances certification mark

Fireplaces classified as non-specific gas appliances or LPG gas appliances may be labeled with the mark of passage of voluntary inspection by the Japan Gas Appliances Inspection Association.

Contacts:

- Japan Gas Appliances Inspection Association
TEL: 03-5570-5981 <http://www.jia-page.or.jp>

Household gas appliance certification mark



3) Safety Certification Mark (S Mark)

Third party certification organizations commissioned by the government, the Japan Electrical Safety & Environment Technology Laboratories (JET) and the Japan Quality Assurance Organization (JQA) conduct safety test on the individual products and check the quality control systems of the factories. Products conformed to be safe may be labeled with the following safety certification marks. Safety certification marks are combinations of the logo marks of the certification organizations with the common certification mark of the Steering Council of Safety Certification for Electrical and Electronic Components and Material of Japan (SCEA).

S Mark (Safety Certification Mark)



- Japan Electrical Safety & Environment Technology Laboratories (JET)
TEL: 03-3466-5145 <http://www.jet.or.jp>
- Japan Quality Assurance Organization (JQA)
TEL: 03-3583-9001 <http://www.jqa.jp>

5. Taxes

(1) Customs Duties

Imports of fireplaces are duty free.

(2) Consumption Tax

CIF x 5%

6. Product Characteristics

Visible flame fireplaces come in two main types: built-in types and freestanding types. Built-in type ovens are affixed to the wall with fireproof bricks or decorative stone material, and the oven and flue are integrated into the exterior wall and room divider wall. In contrast, freestanding ovens are placed on top of non-flammable flooring material, with the flue protruding into the room space. Another type of oven is placed in the center of the room with an attached round or rectangular hood, thereby rendering the flame visible from any location 360 degrees around. In the past, fireplaces referred to the open brick or stone fireplaces built directly in walls for heating rooms by bringing the air in the rooms in direct contact with the flames. At the present time, however, closed type units and standing stoves are also treated as fireplaces. Fireplaces are often placed in the living rooms, parlors, etc. of general homes and play an important role as a piece of interior decor in addition to their inherent function as heaters.

Viewed by source of heat, most fireplaces are firewood-burning types. These account for over 90 percent of the fireplaces now installed. Recently, however, gas and electric types have come into attention in view of the cramped housing conditions and the need for conservation of resources. In addition, more and more homes are installing open-flame fireplaces and stoves that use gas as fuel to burn firewood.

Note: The Building Standard Law and the Fire Service Law, which impose restrictions on the installation of fireplaces, do not clearly define what fireplaces and stoves mean. The Japan Fireplace Association, for convenience, refers to the built-in types as "fireplaces" and the freestanding types as "stoves" and thereby differentiates between the two based on their form.

<Firewood fireplaces>

Firewood fireplaces are the most pleasant in terms of atmosphere. There is considered to be large potential demand for luxury, high interior value imported fireplaces. In addition to the various restrictions on the place of installation or chimneys, however, there are other problems such as the acquisition and storage of firewood and the need for periodic maintenance, which mean that installation is not necessarily that easy in view of the current day urban housing conditions. Firewood fireplaces are subject to numerous restrictions in installation and therefore should be incorporated into the design of homes right from the very start. Imported firewood fireplaces may be classified as follows:

1) Installed fireplace units

These are the traditional types of fireplace made of brick or stone and built into the wall for heating a room by bringing the air in the room in direct contact with the flames. They give the room a luxury atmosphere and are effective heat accumulators.

2) Built-in types

These are the type of fireplace most popular at the present time. Made of cast iron or steel plate and shaped as boxes, they are designed to be emplaced in brick or stone fireplace areas. They come in both closed and open types. The surrounding brick or stone stores heat, so they are effective heat accumulators.

3) Freestanding types

These are made of cast iron or steel plate and are designed to stand freely on the floor. There are closed types with doors made of heat resistant glass and open types with no doors. Installation is relatively easy and little space is taken.

4) Others

There are also stoves, which differ in name but are functionally equivalent to freestanding types, and cooking types with oven functions as well. These are all included in fireplaces in the broad sense of the term.

The open types of the above all have a low heating effect since a large amount of room air is exhausted outside through the chimney to prevent smoke from flowing back into the room. The direct enjoyment of the flames, however, is an attractive design feature. The closed types, on the other hand, burn fuel with only a small amount of air, so little room air is exhausted. Therefore, they are five times more effective in heating than the open types.

<Gas fireplaces>

There are also built-in types and freestanding types of gas fireplaces. In the U.S., demand for gas fireplaces has been rising due to the convenience compared with firewood fireplaces. Some gas types do not require exhaust ducts. These fireplaces also have the merits of ease of installation and low maintenance, for example, not requiring the cleaning of chimneys as with firewood fireplaces.

At the present time, among the imports, only American made gas fireplaces have passed inspection by the Japan Gas Appliances Inspection Association and are being marketed in Japan. Note that sometimes Japanese units are used for the burner portions of the fireplaces in view of the inspection requirements.

<Electric fireplaces>

Electric fireplaces were first developed in the United Kingdom. They comprise electric heaters shaped like flames or firewood designed to be emplaced in mantelpieces and often are used less for heating and more as interior decor for creating a pleasant room atmosphere. The electric fireplaces are simplest to install and fill the demand for fireplaces in apartments where room renovation is difficult. They are relatively inexpensive as well. Recently, Japanese mail order companies have offered them.

7. Domestic Distribution System and Business Practices

(1) Domestic Market Conditions

While fireplaces enjoy strong popularity, few homes have enough space for installing them. Further, the development and spread of more practical heating systems, etc. have hindered the increase in sales of fireplaces. The industry is working to expand sales channels by marketing them as equipment for the general living room rather than resort and for the cities rather than countryside, but the main sources of demand for fireplaces continue to be rich suburban residential areas and resort towns in Nagano, Tochigi, Gunma, and other prefectures. Despite the heating function of fireplaces, there is almost no demand in cold areas like Hokkaido and Tohoku. This is because of the spread of more efficient large-sized oil or gas burning heating systems in these regions. Fireplaces are marketed as interior furnishings and are not considered of practical use. One of the important recent trends seen in the industry has been the start of installation of fireplaces in ordinary residential areas of cities. This is believed to be due to the toward larger housing space and the recent spread of imported housing.

Japan does not have much of a history of use of fireplaces, therefore no clear standards for them have been set under the law. Further, trouble is often encountered over the treatment of fireplaces at the stage of application for approval at local government offices. To improve the situation, therefore, the industry is working to set up its own standards and promote the spread of safe fireplaces.

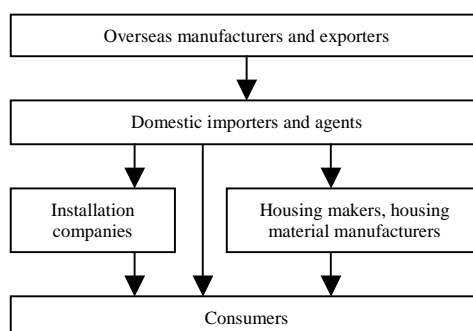
Over 90% of demand for fireplaces in Japan is for firewood fireplaces. Firewood fireplaces are mostly of the built-in type and freestanding type. The best selling units range in price from ¥400,000 to ¥800,000 for built-in types and ¥300,000 to ¥600,000 for freestanding types. Note that most installed fireplace units are luxury items some of which cost over ¥1 million. The gas fireplaces imported from the United States, and the electric fireplaces imported from the United Kingdom, sell for about ¥700,000 and ¥100,000 to ¥300,000, respectively (prices not including installation). The electric fireplaces, which require no installation work, are currently of interest as flame-less fireplaces for use in housing complexes, condominiums, etc. where installation of real fireplaces would not be easy. Consumers generally select their fireplaces on the bases of their design and price and are seldom particular about the country where they were produced.

(2) Distribution Channels

Importers of fireplaces usually sell and install them as well. The large housing manufacturers, etc. sell fireplaces installed in the homes they sell, but some of these have the importers do the installation work for the fireplaces.

Companies not directly importing fireplaces purchase from importers, then they sell and install. While fireplaces are also being manufactured in Japan, most of the products on the market are imported.

Fig. 2 Distribution channel for fireplaces



(3) Key Considerations for entering the Japanese Market

There are no special legal regulations governing the import or sale of fireplaces using firewood, but there are restrictions on installation under the Building Standard Law and the Fire Service Law, so it is important to learn about these regulations in depth. Further, caution is required in that local governments set different regulations under these laws. When importing pipe for use in chimneys, etc. from the U.S., pay attention to the differences in specifications and dimensions due to the use of different units of measurement there. Note further that the enforcement of the Product Liability Law in Japan means that importers, vendors, etc. are liable for loss of life, physical injury, or damage to property caused by defective products, so full care is required in quality control.

8. After-Sales Service

If cracks appear in the cast iron or steel plate portions of the fireplaces, the doors break down, or problems occur in the connection of the chimney, etc., it might cause a fire, so speedy after-sales service is important. In the case of fireplaces using firewood to generate heat, it is necessary to clean the chimney about twice a year, so many companies offer as part of their package a chimney cleaning service. Gas fireplaces and electric fireplaces can also cause fires if malfunctioning, so sales and installation companies offer after-sales service.

9. Related Product Categories

The related products of fireplaces include the various fireplace accessories such as bellows, fire tools, and fire screens. There are no special legal regulations governing the import or sale of these items. They may be freely imported and sold.

10. Direct Imports by Individuals

There are no legal regulations governing imports by individuals. In some cases, however, gas fireplaces cannot be used due to the differences in the size of the gas cocks or the types of the gas used. Further, there are sometimes restrictions as to the installation of fireplaces as explained above.

11. Related Organizations

- Japan Fireplace and Stove Association TEL: 047-445-9506 <http://www.jfsa.gr.jp>