

LAT Home | Print Edition | All Sections

Los Angeles Times | Blogs

Jobs | Cars.com | Real Estate | More Classifieds

SEARCH

You are here: [LAT Home](#) > [Blogs](#) > [Pardon Our Dust](#)

News/Opinion

- [California | Local](#)
- [National](#)
- [World](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Washington](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Environment](#)
- [Opinion](#)

Arts/Entertainment

- [Entertainment](#)
- [The Guide](#)
- [Company Town](#)
- [Arts & Culture](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [The Envelope](#)
- [TV Listings](#)
- [Movie Showtimes](#)

Living

- [Travel](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [Home & Garden](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Image](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Brand X](#)

Data Desk

- [Video](#)
- [Photography](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Crosswords/Sudoku](#)
- [Your Scene](#)

Blogs

- [Columnists](#)
- [Print Edition](#)
- [Readers Rep](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [All Sections](#)

Buy, Sell & More

- [Jobs](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Foreclosure Sale](#)
- [Rentals](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [Local Values](#)
- [Coupons](#)
- [Newspaper Ads](#)

Place an Ad

- [In the Newspaper](#)
- [Online](#)

Settings/Services

- [Sign In](#)
- [Register](#)
- [Personalized News](#)
- [E-Mail Newsletters](#)
- [RSS Feeds](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [L.A. Times Archives](#)
- [Reprint Requests](#)
- [Work for Us](#)

Home Delivery

PARDON OUR DUST

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HOME IMPROVEMENT TALES WITH KATHY PRICE-ROBINSON

Tank water heaters better, this green builder says

Click to see the latest on [Kathy's Remodeling Blog](#)

Over here at the Robinson/Price-Robinson abode, there has been a standoff concerning the new water heater we need so badly. Ours is likely 20 years old and not very efficient. Our gas bill would go down immensely if we replaced that beast.

But the choices are many. Do we get a new and efficient gas-powered tank model? Or a tankless gas-fired model?

Or, if we are planning to install solar power when the prices of photovoltaic systems are expected to drop by 2010, shouldn't we install either an electric-powered tank model or an electric-powered tankless model? (See a [comparison of lifecycle costs](#).)

Trouble is, with the latter two choices, we need about \$1,000 worth of electrical work done to give them the 220 volts of power they require.

I'm the one who wants the electric, tankless, on-demand system. And Bill wants the gas-powered tank system. Thus, a standoff.

But I think we might be getting closer to doing it Bill's way, and that's always so much easier all the way around. Spouses, can you relate?

Part of my thinking about the tankless system is that most of the cool green builders I respect are big, big proponents of the tankless systems. And that means a lot to me.

But I was recently contacted by [Wes Harding](#), a green-leaning builder in Long Beach (Lic. No. 895042) who believes that new, super-efficient tank systems are actually the better way to go.

Wes provided a link to an article about a [scientific analysis](#) of all systems, but, he noted: "The only problem I see with the article is efficiency is measured in gas or electricity consumed, not the amount of water used."

Here's a chart from the analysis:

In terms of both water and energy savings, Wes is sold on tank water heaters for these reasons:

1. God forbid, but if we are ever in a major earthquake or disaster, where do we get our water supply from if we have converted to tankless? With a tank system, the water in the tank can be used in an emergency.
2. Water is wasted in a tankless system because it has to be heated through a coil before it reaches the point of use.
3. Tankless systems operate on the volume of water. If you set your faucet to a trickle, the heater won't kick in. This allows for "slugs" or cold spurts between the hot-water delivery as well as more water consumed.
4. A limited number of fixtures can be used at one time.
5. More electrical energy is consumed as the amount of water increases because of the energy it takes to provide water pressure.



Model: BWC M44076FBH2	Model: BWC M44076FBNA	Model: Tankless #1	Model: Tankless #2
Energy Factor for 1st 2 week test: 0.6756	Energy Factor for 1st 2 week test: 0.6769	Energy Factor for 1st 2 week test: 0.6875	Energy Factor for 1st 2 week test: 0.8081
Energy Factor for 2nd 2 week test: 0.6733	Energy Factor for 2nd 2 week test: 0.7054	Energy Factor for 2nd 2 week test: 0.7076	Energy Factor for 2nd 2 week test: 0.7987
Energy Factor for 3rd 2 week test: 0.6554	Energy Factor for 3rd 2 week test: 0.6929	Energy Factor for 3rd 2 week test: 0.7321	Energy Factor for 3rd 2 week test: 0.7929
Average Energy Factor: 0.6714	Average Energy Factor: 0.6917	Average Energy Factor: 0.7091	Average Energy Factor: 0.7999
Annual Operating Cost: \$338.55	Annual Operating Cost: \$328.61	Annual Operating Cost: \$320.55	Gas: \$284.16 Electric: \$4.31 Total: \$288.47

A few more links from Wes:

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- A local company that manufactures **on-demand recirculating water pumps**. The products stops wasting water and can be added to any water heater.
- A nonprofit that sells **energy-efficient products** that are very affordable.
- **Green companies** in Long Beach