



Ken Field

Owner of Slate
Belt Energy
Services

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

New Fangled Gadget

There is a new kind of water heater that's been out for a while now and for the life of me I can't figure out why anyone would want one. Everyone is familiar with an electric water heater. The 50 gallon size is the most popular and they do an ok job at satisfying the need for residential use. Sparing you the boring details if you start with a 50 gallon electric water heater full of hot water you can open a faucet and use about 65 gallons of water if you take an hour to do it. If you do it faster you will get the 50 from the tank and then cold water. That's because the recovery rate is slow. Manufacturers don't want the water heater to dim the lights in the house so they size the heating element accordingly. There are 2 heating elements in the tank but only one can be on at a time. If you start with a tank of cold water and want to take a shower, you better take a nap first. That's just the way it is. Well what if you could make the water heater more efficient? Sounds great, right? How about putting a heat pump on top and using the heat to make hot water? Well if you don't know anything about heat pumps you might like that idea. The heat pump on top of the water heater is very similar to the heat pump you heat your home with, just smaller. They move heat from one place to another.

So a heat pump water takes heat from wherever it's installed, usually basement or utility room, and puts it into the water. Where does the heat come from to reheat that space? Right, your central system. But if it makes a lot of hot water that's ok. How does 7 gallons an hour sound? What? Yeah, but there's a tax credit for them. Wow, great. But they cost easily 4 times what a 50 gallon electric water heater does so you'll have another couple thousand invested to save a few bucks a month. When the tank leaks which is average 15 years, you can't keep the heat pump and replace the tank, you have to scrap the whole thing.

You will have 180 months to recover the difference between an electric water heater and a heat pump water heater. \$2000 divided by 180 is \$11.11. I doubt it's possible to save that amount every month on an electric water heater. Maybe I'm getting gold but I don't see the logic.

Ken Field is the owner of Slate Belt Energy and Field's Service, Inc. As a certified energy rater and contractor, he is qualified to assess every aspect of energy usage and prescribe solutions to save energy. He can be reached at 610-759-6306 or email Ken@FieldsService.com

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