

Words to the Wise

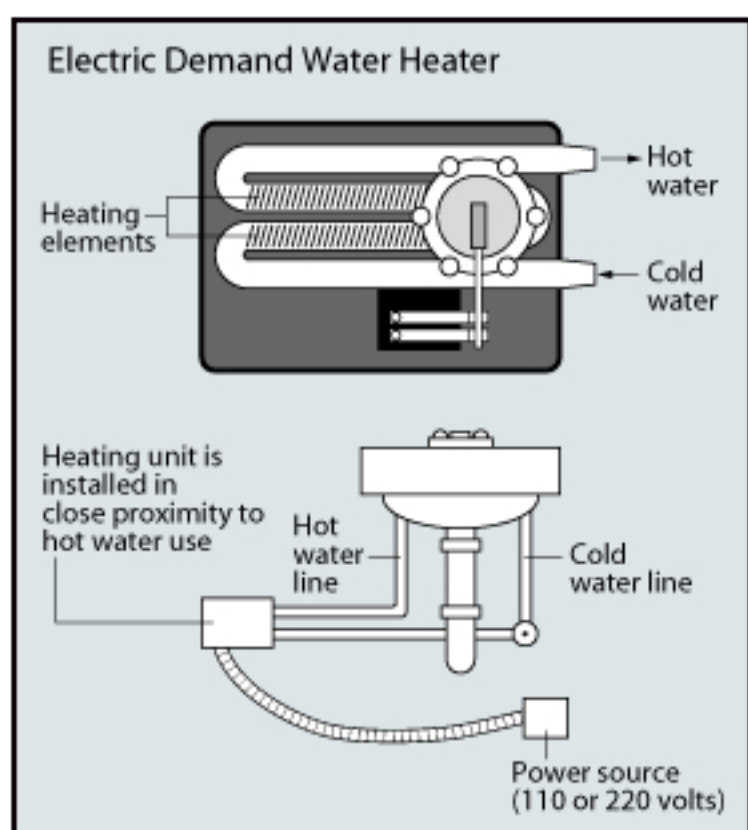
Tankless System Saves Space and Energy

On demand is great when you decide it's time to watch a movie. It works just as well when it comes to a water heater, and it's an energy-saver too. More and more home buyers want to learn about tankless water heaters, so here is some information to share with your clients.



A tankless (also called demand and instantaneous) water heater provides hot water only when you want it, and it does so without using a storage tank. The advantage is that it avoids the heat loss associated with traditional storage water heaters.

A traditional heater works by providing hot water from a ready reservoir (20 to 80 gallons) of hot water. Hot water is released from the top of the tank when you turn on the hot water tap. To replace that hot water, cold water enters the bottom of the tank, ensuring that the tank is always full.



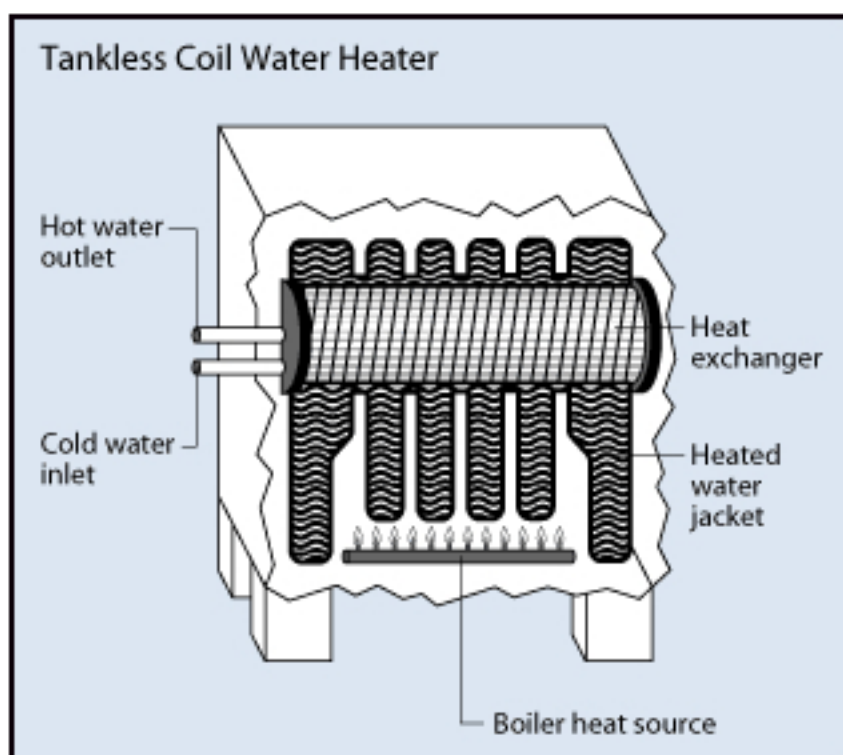
A tankless system works differently. When the hot water tap is turned on, cold water travels through a pipe into the unit. Either a gas burner or an electric element heats the water. As a result, tankless water heaters deliver a constant supply of hot water. There is no wait for the storage tank to fill up with enough hot water.

Typically, tankless water heaters provide hot water at a rate of two to five gallons per minute. Water heated by natural gas provides water at a faster rate than water heated by an electric element.

There can be a down-side for large households when multiple uses of hot water are desired. Taking a hot shower and running a dishwasher at the same time can create too great a burden for the tankless system, but there is a solution. Separate tankless water heaters can be dedicated to appliances such as washers and dishwashers.

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The energy savings from tankless systems include the elimination of a constantly burning pilot light. There is also energy savings when heat loss in a standard tank is considered. In addition, there are cost-savings to be realized from the installation of a tankless system. These savings can range from \$10 to over \$40 per year. With the installation of some systems, the model will pay for itself in approximately four years.



In homes that use over 40 gallons of water daily, a tankless system can be over 25% more efficient than conventional storage tank water heaters.

Factors to review when considering a purchase of a tankless water heater include size, fuel type and energy efficiency.

Most tankless water heaters come with a life expectancy of over 20 years. They are easy to repair and easily replaceable parts can extend their life by many more years. In contrast, storage water heaters typically last 10 to 15 years. Of course, periodic water heater maintenance can significantly extend any utility, including the water heater. Regular maintenance also minimizes any loss of energy efficiency.