

Local stove dealers including Alan Currier of Country Stoves on Woodstock Avenue say with home heating oil prices returning to normal levels this summer, demand for pellet stoves has softened.

"The climate is a lot different this year than it was last year," said Currier, who sells Enviro brand pellet stoves.

Currier said the recession hasn't helped either and neither have the problems customers of Vermont Wood Energy encountered last heating season. Many customers of the Pine Street pellet stove retailer never received the pellets they had paid for. The bankrupt company is in the process of liquidating its assets at auction to pay its creditors.

Currier did say that there is more interest in fireplace inserts for heating with wood and pellets.

He also said that there are federal energy credits available to defray the cost of the purchase and installation of a pellet or wood stove.

Rick Kent of E.C. Crosby & Sons in Danby said pellet stove sales are down from a year ago. But Kent also said last year was a "crazy year" with skyrocketing oil prices.

"Compared to last it's off a lot but it's about average," he said.

Crosby carries Enviro and Hestia brand pellet stoves and sells a line of commercial wood boilers and furnaces.

The store on Route 7 also sells wood pellets. The current pickup price is \$289 a ton. A three-ton delivery in Rutland County adds \$75 to the cost.

Gary Goodemote of Friends of the Sun in Manchester said pellet stoves are less appealing in the current environment of lower oil prices.

"Pellets are probably about 25 percent more than wood," Goodemote said. "They're probably a little cheaper than gas and I bet they're on a par with oil right now."

He said the Quadra-Fire pellet stoves he sells cost between \$2,000 and \$4,000, depending on the size and the finish.

As far as pellets go, Friends of the Sun carries pellets as a convenience for customers if they happen to run out of the fuel.

Kent of E.C. Crosby said there should be a plentiful supply of wood pellets this heating season. Although there was a run on wood pellets and pellet stoves last year, Kent said his store never had a problem supplying customers.

"This year the mills are geared more so for a larger volume than in the past so pellets are out there pretty easy this year," he said.

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