

A HEATED (FIREPLACE)

DISCUSSION:

PRE-DESIGNED VS. DESIGN-ON-SITE



By C. Todd Cleveland
Dallas, Texas



Pre-designed, cast stone fireplace surrounds take the design and engineering worries out of the mason's hands and puts masons back doing what they do best: installing masonry.

Ease of **installation** is also an **important factor** to consider **when deciding** between a **pre-designed** fireplace and one **designed-on-site**.

Although there are many reasons to install a pre-designed fireplace over a design-on-site fireplace, one of the greatest benefits to a mason contractor is that "all of the design and engineering has been done already," says Peggy Jones, sales manager at Stone Magic, Dallas, Texas.

Design, of course, is always an important issue with a client. Often the client is uncertain as to what style would best fit in the desired environment. When this happens, the client will often turn to the first person he or she feels is the most qualified to help at the time: the mason contractor.

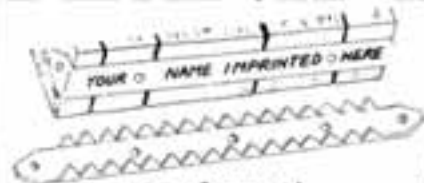
The contractor has two options at this point. One is to install a design-on-site fireplace—but that could potentially leave the client feeling dissatisfied. "A mason is not a designer," states Jones. "Having access to high quality designs allows the mason to be a hero to the client." A recommendation by the mason contractor for a pre-designed fireplace is often the better solution. Not only does it allow the mason to offer a value added service to the client, but it leaves his valuable reputation intact.

Asked when a contractor should recommend a pre-designed fireplace surround, Jones replies, "When a fireplace is a focal point for the room or the home, or if the mason is asked

to help with a design decision for a high quality fireplace at a reasonable price." Ease of installation is also an important factor to consider when deciding between a pre-designed fireplace and one designed-on-site. Both the cost and the time involved with the installation of a cast stone fireplace become a primary concern to the client and to the mason contractor.

Jones says the simple fact is that "masons benefit by installing pre-engineered fireplace surrounds that are easy to install. This allows the mason to charge a reasonable fee to the client and still

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There are **equal benefits** for the **client**

and the **mason** in the form

of **quality designs** that are **easy to install.**

make money on the installation." And, cost not withstanding, assembly diagrams describing the technical aspects of the fireplace surround speed up the installation.

When asked what other important requirements there are for installing pre-designed, cast stone fireplaces, Jones had this to say, "Being neat and careful are important factors. When working up close, often on retrofit projects, it is important for the mason to take care to cover stonework and easily damaged surroundings."

In the end, time is money. Just how long does it take to get a pre-designed, cast stone fireplace? The sooner the decision is made to install a pre-designed fireplace the better, as cast stone fireplaces must usually be produced to order. There are, however, some timesaving issues to keep in mind. A high volume, cast stone manufacturer, like Stone Magic, has a larger selection of fireplaces in inventory. "No production is required for the most popular styles," according to Jones. "For the styles that must be produced, Stone Magic maintains the tooling that lowers the production of units to four to six weeks standard—and they can be done faster if necessary."

Delivery time should also be taken into consideration. Stone Magic, for instance, ships nationwide directly to the job site via common carriers.

Upon delivery, there are other issues that can help to speed up the installation. "We furnish assembly drawings," says Jones. "These diagrams come complete with part marks that are associated directly to the actual parts, and cross-sections that make the layout and installation of the fireplace as easy as possible. We even supply sand for pointing and help with patching information and color matching."

It is also important to keep the manufacturer's warranty in mind. Does the manufacturer offer a replacement or "remake" service in the unlikely event a part is damaged during shipment or missing from the order? Stone Magic not only has this service in effect, but an even more important feature is the company's belief in "old business comes first." "In simple terms," explains Jones, "Stone Magic will remake missing or damaged parts and will also put a top priority status on the production in order to get your stone to you as soon as possible."

When asked who benefits most from an installation of a Stone Magic pre-designed, cast stone fireplace surround, Jones states, "There are equal benefits for the client and the mason in the form of quality designs that are easy to install. In the end, everyone wins." —

C. Todd Cleveland is the Marketing Director for CSCS, Inc. in Dallas, Texas. He has been a designer, project manager and marketing consultant within the architectural and construction industries since 1988. He can be contacted by e-mail at draftcscs@aol.com.

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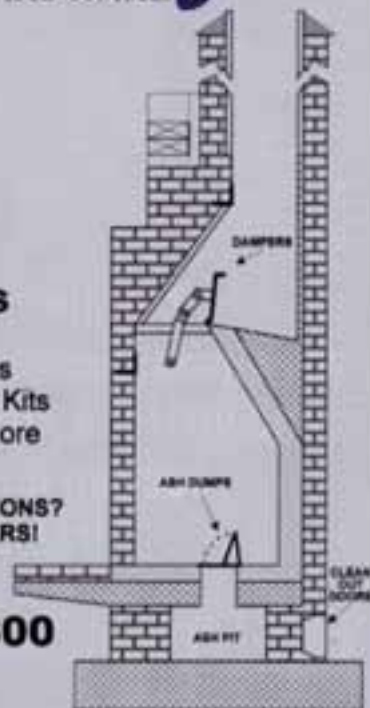
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