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Fuels and Combustion

Combustion Principles, Heat and Flames; Air Required, Excess Air and Secondary Air; Draft Requirements, Classification of Coal and Coke, Firing Methods, Classification and Combustion of Oil and Gas; Dustless Treatment of Coal

THE data given in the first part of this chapter are of general application to the various fuels used in domestic heating which are coal, coke, oil and gas. The choice of fuel is a question of dependability, cleanliness, fuel availability, economy, operating requirements and control.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF COMBUSTION

Combustion may be defined as the chemical combination of a substance with oxygen with a resultant evolution of heat. The rate of combustion depends partly upon the specific rate of reaction of the combustible substance with oxygen, partly upon the rate at which oxygen is supplied, and upon the temperature obtained due to surrounding conditions.

Complete combustion is obtained when all of the combustible elements in the fuel are oxidized with all of the oxygen with which they can combine. All of the oxygen supplied may not be utilized.

Perfect combustion is defined as the result of supplying the required amount of oxygen for combination with all of the combustible elements of the fuel and utilizing all of the oxygen so supplied.

The oxygen required for the process of combustion is obtained from air which is a mechanical mixture of oxygen, nitrogen and small amounts of carbon dioxide, water vapor and inert gases. These inert gases are generally included with the nitrogen, and for engineering purposes the values given herewith may be used.

	By VOLUME, PER CENT	By WEIGHT, PER CENT
Oxygen, O_2	20.9	23.15
Nitrogen, N_2	79.1	76.85

The combination of oxygen with the combustible elements and compounds of a fuel is in accordance with fixed laws. In the case of perfect combustion the reactions and resultant combinations are shown in Table 1.

The most important condition governing the process of combustion is temperature. It is necessary to bring a combustible substance to its ignition temperature before it will unite in chemical combination with oxygen to produce combustion. The ignition temperatures for several of the combustible constituents of fuels are presented in Table 1.

HEAT OF COMBUSTION

As previously stated, the process of combustion results in the evolution of heat. The heat generated by the complete combustion of a unit of fuel is constant for a given combination of combustible elements and compounds, and is known as the *heat of combustion*, *calorific value*, or *heating value* of the fuel.