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### ME - Stove Sales Heat Up As Price Of Oil Soars

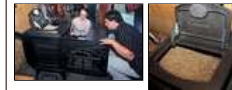
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Dealers are amazed at how quickly pellet stoves are being snapped up by customers wary of winter

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description

#### Stove Sales Heat Up As Price Of Oil Soars

Dealers are amazed at how quickly pellet stoves are being snapped up by customers wary of winter.

By LARRY GRARD, Blethen Maine News Service  
 June 22, 2008

**Caption 1:** Esther Bullard shows a pellet stove to customer Ed Goff at the Stove Barn in Winslow. David Leaming/Blethen Maine News Service

**Caption 2:** Pellets fill a stove for sale at the Stove Barn in Winslow. Marty Farnum can't keep pellet stoves in his Northern Lights Hearth Sports store on Wilton Road in Farmington. David Leaming/Blethen Maine News Service

Marty Farnum can't keep pellet stoves in his Northern Lights Hearth Sports store on Wilton Road in Farmington.

Nor can Mack Curtis, who owns Wayne's Stove & Canoe Shop in Madison. Ditto for The Stove Barn on China Road in Winslow, owned by Wade Bullard.

Heating-oil prices that could flirt with \$5 a gallon this winter have more people ready to switch away from oil. For an investment of roughly \$3,000 plus the cost of pellets, a pellet stove might pay for itself in a year or two, shop owners say.

Mainers appear to be believers, and they're scooping up the burners as well as stocking up on pellets, in some cases buying a truckload of pellets at a time, Curtis said.

"We're pretty much sold out of what we have," Farnum said. "I've got 150 on order."

Northern Lights has sold more than 100 pellet stoves this year.

"There's no need to panic," Farnum said of the rush to such stoves. "But if I'm interested in a stove, I would get into a shop and put my name in, and maybe even put a deposit down."

Farnum said that the cost of pellets is increasing slightly, due to transportation costs. He has been selling them for \$285 a ton, but expects that price to increase.

Northern Lights sells one-ton pallets in 40-pound bags and 22-pound bags.

"We're getting calls from all over the state and out of state," Farnum said. "We got a call from Nova Scotia this morning."

Parks mentioned that Fabian sells pellet stoves at its Olde New England Hearth & Home store on Kennedy Memorial Drive, in Oakland.

But the draft-induced stoves require electricity and the kind of care that oil burning doesn't require. A pellet-stove owner should be at home in case the power goes out, when they are in use, to maintain the draft, he said. Also, pellet stoves require weekly cleaning, Parks said.

"You let oil go back to \$70 a barrel, and everybody will go back to oil," he said.

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Parks said that, as of June 13, Fabian was selling heating oil at \$469.90 for 100 gallons on a pre-buy, and \$474.90 street price. Not a good situation, he acknowledged.

"It's 85 degrees out and oil is \$474.90," he said. "This is not good. We need government regulation."

Across the bridge in Winslow, The Stove Barn owner Wade Bullard quoted numbers similar to Farnum. Bullard said he has sold about 150 pellet stoves, and has another 60 on order, at an average wait of five weeks. On average, Bullard sells 10 stoves a day.

"They're selling like wildfire right now," Bullard said. "With the price of fuel, people are just scared."

The Stove Barn offers three stove brands, ranging in price from \$1,699 to \$3,200. Installation is \$250.

Pellets are available in 40-pound bags at \$260 a ton.

"This is wicked abnormal to be selling this many stoves this time of year," Bullard said.

Wayne's Stove & Canoe Shop has sold more than 100 stoves this year. Curtis received 13 stoves one recent week, and sold them all the next day. He is taking \$50 deposits to hold a stove.

"I can't get them in fast enough," Curtis said. "They're going to be scarce. They're aren't going to be enough around if people wait until fall."

Wayne's charges \$2,999 for its Osburn stove, and recently held a sale for \$2,399.

Curtis said he burned three tons of pellets in his stove last winter. He loads his stove before bed, and before going to work in the morning.

Wayne's doesn't sell pellets, Curtis said, because he cannot compete with prices offered by Wal-Mart, Tractor Supply or The Home Depot.

Thanks to Kelly Short and Daily Northern Forest News Digest for passing this along!

#### additional information

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