

Think about a new water heater before you really need one!



The Model MSR50245 50-gallon electric water heater from Marathon is warranted not to leak for as long as you own your home, because of its seamless molded polybutylene (plastic) tank. The unit also has a tough fiberglass outer shell that won't rust; the wide spacing between the inner tank and outer shell is filled with environmentally friendly Envirofoam insulation. Other features include an energy-saving pipe-wrap kit, commercial-grade fill tube for greater durability and an Energy Factor of .94. For details, contact your local electric cooperative or go to www.marathon-heaters.com.

Most people wait until their water heater breaks down before shopping for a new one. Since they're in a hurry to restore their hot water supply, they usually don't take the time to shop for the water heater that best meets their needs. Instead, they often make a bad choice, settling either for a water heater that's on sale or the unit a local plumber "uses all the time."

You can avoid this situation with a little planning. With water heater warranties ranging from six years to "lifetime," it's difficult to predict exactly when a water heater will fail. On average, it's probably safe to say that a water heater will last from 6 to 12 years—or possibly longer, if it's been properly maintained and regularly serviced.

However, unless you've lived in your home for a long time, you probably didn't choose your present water heater; the previous owners or a builder did. As a result, you may not know how old it is, how well it's been maintained or even if the original warranty is still in effect.

If your present water heater is showing obvious signs of old age—rust around the bottom of the tank or leaks starting to develop—you need to act immediately. But if your water heater is functioning properly and you believe it's at least seven years old, take a little time to evaluate your hot water needs and begin comparing the various types and models on the market today—which will help you make an informed and energy-wise purchase tomorrow.

Size is not the most important consideration

You may be inclined just to look for a new water heater that's the same size as

the one you have now—replacing the old 40-gallon storage tank unit with a new 40-gallon one. That could be an expensive mistake.

For example, what if your family is growing? You'll soon need a higher-capacity water heater. Or perhaps you bought a new home—just for the two of you—that previously was occupied by a large family. You might be able to downsize the water heater.

On the other hand, size could be an issue if the space for your water heater is limited—especially if the unit is located in a closet, as it is in many

Start saving now!
Even if your old, but inefficient, water heater is functioning properly, consider replacing it with a new, energy-efficient electric one. The energy savings alone could pay for the new unit during its lifetime.

manufactured homes. In addition, some of the new super-insulated water heaters are larger in diameter

than their older counterparts and may not fit in the same space. And many storage tank water heaters get taller as their gallon capacity increases.

Will your new water heater recover in time?

The first thing to consider when replacing a storage tank water heater is your family's need for hot water and its relationship to a number called the **first hour rating** (FHR). The first hour rating is the amount of hot water a unit can heat during the highest-demand hour of the day; some people call it "recovery time."

This rating takes into account the tank size and how quickly cold water is heated. A rule of thumb is: The quicker a unit can heat water, the smaller the tank needed; the longer it takes a unit to heat water, the larger