

Avoiding Delays & Headaches on Natural Gas-Fired System Installations in Massachusetts By Philip Neveu, P.E., Vice President of Engineering & Project Management

If you are planning to install natural gas-fired process or power generation equipment, there are some state regulatory requirements that, if not addressed in advance, can cause significant project delays.

Approval to Install an Elevated Pressure System

Many gas-fired industrial dryers, burners, boilers, and CHP prime movers require inlet gas pressures above ½ psig. Operating at pressures above ½ psig can also significantly reduce the overall cost of an installation since smaller diameter piping can be used. HOWEVER, in Massachusetts any natural gas piping system operating above ½ psig is considered “elevated pressure”. This designation mandates that three additional requirements be met before the installation can be started:

1. Develop a plan of the proposed piping system and equipment, stamped by a MA registered
 1. professional engineer
2. Obtain a written “Letter of Availability” from the local gas supplier
3. And then submit a Special Permission Gas Request Application Form to the State Plumbing Board for approval.

Gas-Fired Equipment Approval

All gas-fired appliances, including process heating equipment, industrial burners, and CHP prime movers are required to be approved by the State Plumbing Board prior to installation. This is intended to ensure that equipment complies with state regulations. Equipment vendors who are familiar with this requirement have already received approval for their most common products. However, equipment that is custom designed or sold in limited quantities typically is not on the approved list. Prior to purchase of equipment, you can verify the approval status on the “Approved Products Online System” at the state Plumbing Board website. If the equipment is not listed, it is wise to require the manufacturer to obtain approval as a condition of your purchase order.

Once all the required documentation is gathered, both of these approval processes typically take 4-6 weeks if all goes well. This timeframe can easily be doubled if the application is rejected on the first submittal. If this legwork is not done in advance of the construction phase, the completion date will be directly impacted. Most projects cannot afford this type of delay and therefore it is smart to take a pro-active approach. Our in-house P.E.s are very familiar with the process. If you have any questions or require technical assistance with these requirements, please give us a call.



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