

Blown fuses and a sooty hamster

I could write an essay about vacuum cleaners as I've spent thousands on various models over the years. One in particular had a large drum and very heavy-duty motor. It blew fuses at most houses and I think I spent as much time finding blown fuses as sweeping chimneys. It had a 4" hose and sucked about 2000 CFM. At one house, to the horror of the children I accidentally sucked up their pet hamster that was running around. It came out of the drum no worse for wear except a little sooty.

Portable fire

One winter day we arrived at a home to replace the woodstove. No one was home but they were to leave the door open and to our surprise the old stove had a rip-roaring fire burning. The door latch was broken so they had a poker propped against it to keep it closed but there was so much air getting in that the fire was very hot. Luckily the stove was in a walkout basement that was not finished and with a concrete floor. So with a shovel we removed the burning logs putting them outside. The stove was still full of hot coals so we put on the thickest leather gloves we had and quickly removed the stovepipe and rolled the beast out the door with a two-wheeled cart. After installing the new stove we shoveled in the hot coals from the old one and brought in the burning logs. It was the fastest fire I've ever lit in a new stove.

Get rid of the fumes

Of course the old brute still had lots of burning coals in it, so we had to drive back to the shop with the windows open to get rid of the fumes. Back at the shop we put the still very hot stove outside the back door and when our other crew came back hours later they noticed that the snow was melting as it landed on it. One of the boys touched it and just about burned his hand.

Ad campaign

One year I ran an ad campaign that we would give \$100 trade-in value for any old stove. We could have just knocked \$100 off the price of the new stove, but psychologically people like to get some value for their old stove, especially if it's really a junker. Truthfully, most of them went straight to the scrap yard. On one occasion the

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Rooftops



boys were replacing a franklin stove. Not only are most franklins made of

very cheap cast from China, but they are also very awkward to move and don't fit on a cart well.

Boys in trouble

The boys proceeded with the standard practice of putting the franklin on a tarp and within minutes broke up the brittle cast iron with a small sledgehammer. Much easier to carry it out in pieces. The customer stood there wide-eyed and exclaimed that they were in trouble as your boss paid \$100 for that stove.



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