

Chapter 9

Working With a Builder or Going DIY

Three paths to a finished masonry heater

Your Path to a Finished Heater

Path 1 - Full Turn-Key Installation by Solid Rock: For clients in Wisconsin, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Minnesota, Idaho, Wyoming, and surrounding areas, we offer full turn-key installation including foundation design assistance, core assembly, chimney system supply and installation, and masonry facing in natural stone or brick. We travel for heater installations throughout the Midwest and western states. Contact us for a project-specific quote.

Path 2 - SR Core Kit Plus Local Mason: The most common path for clients outside our immediate installation area. You order an SR Core kit from us and hire a local mason for the foundation work and exterior facing. Our course-by-course assembly instructions are detailed enough that a mason with no previous masonry heater experience can build our core correctly. We provide support by phone and email throughout the build.

Path 3 - DIY Owner-Builder: Masonry heaters are among the most accessible major masonry projects for skilled owner-builders. You do not need to be a professional mason to build a masonry heater core, but you do need patience, attention to detail, and the willingness to follow detailed instructions carefully. The SR Cast Core is the better choice for first-time builders.

Working With Your Local Mason on Heater Facing

Most local masons have not built masonry heater facings before, but the work is well within the skill set of any experienced residential mason. The primary differences from standard masonry work:

The heater core expands and contracts with temperature. A small air gap is left between the core and the facing, which is grouted (slushed) with mortar as the facing rises around the core. Expansion joints at specified locations must be maintained.

All mortar used in contact with or within 4 inches of the heater facing must be heat-rated refractory mortar. Standard Type S or Type N mortar is not appropriate within this zone.

We provide detailed facing installation notes as part of every kit package and are available by phone to walk your mason through any questions during the build.

Workshops and Hands-On Training

If you are planning to build your own masonry heater - as an owner-builder or as a mason wanting to add masonry heating to your skill set - nothing replaces hands-on learning.

North House Folk School, Grand Marais, Minnesota: 3 to 4-day hands-on workshops covering core assembly, facing, and chimney connection. Classes have been running since 2010 and are open to both owner-builders and professional masons.

MHA Annual Meeting: The Masonry Heater Association of North America holds its annual meeting each spring and includes hands-on building workshops taught by members. This is the best networking and learning opportunity in the industry.

North House Folk School workshop schedule: <https://www.northhouse.org>

Masonry Heater Association of North America: <https://www.mha-net.org>

SR DIY masonry heater kits: <https://solidrockmasonry.com/solid-rock-diy-masonry-heater-kits/>

View completed heater gallery: <https://solidrockmasonry.com/gallery/>

Download the complete guide at:

<https://solidrockmasonry.com/masonry-heater-planning-guide/>

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