ALFRESCO Weathersafe

A new high performance outdoor heater which looks remarkably good value

UK heater specialist, SunSwitch Ltd, has introduced the ALFRESCO Weathersafe™ patio heater, a new slimline design which tackles the shortcomings inherent in other electric patio heaters neatly and simply.

The heater features a safety glass front panel made from toughened *crystal* glass. This has a much higher refractive index than ordinary glass and lets virtually all of the infra red warmth through. This, coupled with the optically designed, polished reflector enables the SunSwitch *ALFRESCO Weathersafe™* to put out more heat than other similarly powered units. In use, it feels noticeably warmer.

Extensive heatsinking on the enclosure, together with the special crystal safety glass front reduce excessive heat build up inside the unit, something which plagues other similar designs, causing premature element failure. Enabling the element to run cooler means it will last longer. In this unit, the element is realistically rated at an impressive 3000 to 4000 hours.

The high quality gold element in ALFRESCO Weathersafe™ produces a neutral pinky-white light, adding a warm inviting ambience to any terrace. Most importantly, the element is clip-replaceable so there is no need to call an electrician when it finally goes. Replacement elements are readily available by post from SunSwitch Ltd and SunSwitch agents.

ALFRESCO Weathersafe heaters have stainless steel brackets and fittings, so they are ideal for use in coastal locations. They come fitted with a 5m cable and plug, and some decent masonry fixings.

For further information contact SunSwitch Limited on 01424 883344 or visit www.sunswitch.net

Factfile

Market awareness and the ECO debate

Market awareness of electric patio heaters is now at an all time high, due in no small part to the smoking ban necessitating pubs and restaurants to equip their terrace and smoking shelters with heaters. It is also partly down to concerns over the high running costs and the non eco-friendly nature of gas fuelled patio heaters, which are so bad for the planet that the European Parliament is considering banning them altogether. In comparison, quartz halogen electric patio heaters consume a fraction of the energy, cost only a few pence an hour to run, and allow the warmth they produce to be directed precisely where it is needed.

The de facto standard

There are different types of electric infra red heaters, but only *quartz halogen* is effective for use outside because of the *shortwave* infra red they produce. In comparison, medium wavelength infra red (produced by halogen heaters and flat panel heaters) does not travel through the air as far and is therefore discernibly less effective at warming people. The *de facto* standard for quartz halogen outdoor heaters looks something like a floodlight, with a tempered safety glass front to protect the internals against the weather. In most cases, the type of glass used traps some of the heat produced, shortening the element life and feeling less warm.

> **“Would you pay an electrician to change a lightbulb?”**

Manufacturers have responded by introducing heaters without glass fronts, sealing the element ends instead with rubber sleeves. The trouble is this approach has created other problems. Firstly while the element may run for longer it is not user replaceable. So it will require an electrician to remove and dismantle the heater - just to replace the element. You wouldn't expect a consumer to buy a light fitting that needed a qualified electrician to change the bulb, would you? Secondly the heater reflector, generally aluminium, is exposed to the weather. Aluminium corrodes quickly, offsetting any small heat advantage of an open-fronted heater. Thirdly, it does not take a rocket scientist to see that the thermal shock of splashing a red hot element with cold water may lead to a loud bang and an unexpected repair bill. Finally there is the cost. Open-fronted heaters are more expensive, because they are more complex to produce.