FIRST FIRING INSTRUCTIONS FOR L&L KILNS WITH A DYNATROL

WHEN TO DO A FIRST TEST FIRING?

Once your kiln is set up, leveled properly (very important), control panel hooked up to the kiln correctly, and all the power wired properly, you are ready for your first firing. Read these instructions and plan your time accordingly.

> **NOTE**: This version is for kilns with the DynaTrol 700 control board (Blue Board).

VIDEO ON HOW TO PROGRAM

See this video for help in programming your DynaTrol for the first firing:
hotkilns.com/programming-first-firing

WHY DO A TEST FIRING?

The test firing is done very slowly, about 16 to 19 hours total to minimize the inner and outer surface temperature differences in the kiln while it goes through its maiden firing. Also this will slowly steam off any moisture absorbed by the firebrick during construction, shipping, and storage.

The test firing is done to cone 5 (about 2167°F) to vitrify the special coating on the inside on the firebrick and to allow an "aluminum oxide" coating to form on the element's surfaces.

The coating on the brick helps to reflect the heat radiated from the elements, strengthen the surface of the firebrick, and help prevent dusting in the kiln.

The oxide layer on the elements helps to protect them from the many contaminants found in many materials fired in a kiln. This aluminum oxide layer will rejuvenate itself every time there is an oxygen rich firing to a high temperature. Going to cone 5 may also point out any problems with your electrical service - like low or incorrect voltage or wrong supply line wire size.

The elements will also seat themselves in the ceramic holders - and any springiness you see when you first get your kiln will be alleviated.

NOTE: Normally bisquing is done to cone 05. Do not be confused by how the test firing uses **SLOW BISQUE** to cone 5, even though normally you would use a **SLOW BISQUE** to cone 05. The Slow Bisque program is used for the test firing BECAUSE it is a long program. We want this to be slow.

The test firing is done with the operator present as much as possible. This is to be sure the kiln is heating up safely, and that the heating kiln affects nothing else in the room or the room itself. As for the operator being present, logistically this may be difficult as the test fire is designed to take about 16 to 19 hours.

To deal with this a "Delayed Start" can be added to the test fire program, allowing you to press **START** at say 5PM, the kiln to start at say 8PM in order to turn off at 3PM the following day while you are there. More detail on this a little further on. You can also split it into two firings (see instructions at the end of this sheet).

> **NOTE:** The test fire is done with the kiln furniture. We highly recommend putting kiln furniture in the kiln because firing an empty kiln can sometimes lead to an an error code on three zone kilns. Anything else in the kiln (clay) will produce contaminants to some degree, and the elements in the kiln have not yet achieved this all important aluminum oxide coating before being subjected to these contaminants.

VENTING

Leave the Vent-Sure downdraft vent system on while the kiln is heating and cooling. Keep the peephole plugs in and the lid closed. If you have no vent system then leave the top peephole plug out during the first test firing.

> **NOTE:** it is best for the evenness and speed of the firing to keep all the peepholes closed. However, for longevity of things like the elements, thermocouples, and kiln-sitter tube, as well as for better colors in clays and glazes, it is best to have as much air as possible moving through the kiln, without compromising the speed and evenness of the firing (this is a tradeoff). Open peepholes can be an OK way to vent, except that uneven drafts through the kiln can affect thermocouple readings, or "freeze" cones, leading to uneven or slow firings.

WHAT TO EXPECT

ELEMENT SMOKING

Brand new elements may have lubricant still on them and may smoke a little initially the first time they are heated. A fan in a window is more than adequate to deal with this. If you have the Vent-Sure vent on this should also be adequate.

FIRST FIRING INSTRUCTIONS FOR L&L KILNS WITH A DYNATROL

NOISES IN AN AUTOMATIC KILN

A **Beep** when you press a button on the DynaTrol keypad.

Clicking noises from inside the control box as the unit heats. This will happen throughout the firing until it shuts off. Sometimes it will happen more frequently than other times. It is the result of the relays opening and closing as the control tells them to, turning the electricity on or off to the elements, working to heat the kiln evenly. (On manual kilns with contactors you will also hear contactors clicking).

Hum. Whenever kiln elements come on they are accompanied by a humming sound from electricity in the elements. This is normal. The natural properties of electricity and the dynamics of the shape of the element combine to create a slight vibration in the element.

WHAT HAPPENS AS THE KILN HEATS UP

All the materials used in the kiln's construction expand incrementally as they are heated. First the inside materials- i.e. the elements, holders, and inside surfaces of the walls, floor, and lid heat and expand slightly. Then, the heat moves slowly through the walls, lid and floor until it begins to heat the outer surface of the kiln. The greater the difference in temperature is between the inside surface vs. outside surface, the more stress there is on the material itself.

Walls, lids and floors can sometimes develop hairline-cracks on the surface or in the some cases, all the way through. Really this is normal and to be expected sooner or later to some degree. If you tighten the stainless steel bands that surround the floor, lid, and walls of the kiln every so often, the fact that the firebrick expands as it heats will mean that the cracks are actually closing up while the kiln is heating, expanding against the cooler outer shell. The geometry of the kiln and the tightness of the stainless steel bands are what holds everything together, whether the brick is in a few pieces or all one piece should not matter a whole lot, although cracked floors should be fully supported as they are with our full-support stands.

See the ***maintain.pdf*** and ***troubleshoot-brick.pdf*** for more information. See this for how to repair hairline cracks: ***hotkilns.com/repairing-hairline-cracks-firebrick-video***).

VISIBLE RED HEAT

Another thing to expect is to see the "red heat" through the seams, between the sections of the kiln, beginning around 1000°F. This is normal. The seam between the lid and the top section will probably appear the largest. This is partly because, when the top heats up, it becomes slightly concave and the edge lifts up.

IMPORTANT NOTE: It is VERY important for this gap between the lid and the rest of the kiln to be even all the way around throughout the firing. If it is more open in the front when hot, then the hinge is out of adjustment and must be raised up. Your kiln's Assembly instructions detail the hinge adjustment. The danger of this condition is that all the weight of the lid is now resting on the inner upper edge of the back firebricks on the top section. They will crack off in a firing or so and probably damage the lid too.

> **CAUTION**: The outer metal and brick surfaces of the kiln will get very hot, as hot as 450°F - easily hot enough to burn you.

The interior of the kiln will look white hot at the highest temperatures.

> **CAUTION**: Be sure to always use rated dark safety glasses when looking through the peepholes to protect your eyes from infrared radiation. See **Kiln Cautions** for details.

CONTROL DISPLAY ON DYNATROL

Acronyms on the DynaTrol's display screen stand for important messages, they are its way of communicating with the user. The DynaTrol display is limited to four letters or numbers at a time. So for example, **TCOS** is the acronym the DynaTrol uses for "thermocouple offset".

Once it hits its target temperature, it will shut off with a **CPLT** (complete) message. Once this message is seen the kiln is no longer running. It is safe to shut off the power to it. If no controlled cool-down was programmed, the kiln will cool quickly at first, then more and more slowly. As it is cooling it will display the **CPLT**, the **amount of time it took to complete the firing**, the **TC2**, and **the current temperature** over and over again.

The temperature will normally be displayed from **TC2**, which is thermocouple number two. Press **1** to see the temperature in the top section- **TC1**. Press **3** to see the temperature in the bottom section of a three or more section kiln. The DynaTrol is checking all three thermocouples every eight seconds even though just one thermocouple's temperature is displayed. The displayed temperature will rise as the kiln heats up, cycling from **TC2** to current temperature inside the kiln over and over again. (A kiln with just one thermocouple will just show the temperature reading, no **TC number**).

FIRST FIRING INSTRUCTIONS FOR L&L KILNS WITH A DYNATROL

DYNATROL CONTROL: STEP BY STEP

1) Turn on power to the kiln with the toggle switch. Display reads WAIT then IDLE.

2) Press **ENTER** and wait until you see IDLE, TC2, and the current temperature cycling over and over again.

3) Press **SLOW BISQUE** and see S-bC.

4) Press **ENTER** and see CONE, and a number (which represents the cone number currently programmed in the control) flashing back and forth.

5) Press **5**, and see the number **5** in the display. .

6) Press **ENTER** and see HOLd, 00.00 flashing back and forth.

7) Press **ENTER** and see IDLE, TC2, and the current temperature cycling over and over.

8) Press the **Preheat** button in the **Easy-Fire Options** section.

9) See HLd, 00.00 flashing back and forth.

10) Press **300** so the display reads 3.00.

11) Press **ENTER** and see IDLE.

12) Press **START/STOP** to begin the test firing.

You have just entered an “Easy-Fire Slow Bisque” Program to cone 5 with a three hour preheat, the combined total of which will take roughly 16-19 hours. The preheat part increases the heat in the kiln at 60°F per hour from room temperature up to 200°F where the hold time comes on, the timer appears, and it holds at 200F for the set amount of time. Once the timer runs out, the rest of the program follows.

Now you must figure out how to be around for the end of the 16-19 hour firing. This is where the Delay Start feature may come in handy. It is a digital hours and minutes timer you can add to the beginning of any program. You tell the timer how many hours and minutes to count down before the DynaTrol turns up the kiln and runs the rest of the program.

> **NOTE**: It is critical for someone to be present for, and especially at the end of, each firing. This is particularly true for this first firing. Even if you have an AutoCone Back-up - no safety device is entirely foolproof.

DO YOU NEED A DELAYED START?

Picture a clock-face and count forward 16 hours from when you planned to press **START/STOP** to begin this program. Will you be present for at least the last few hours? If “YES” then you do not need a delayed start time and you can start the firing when you planned to, skip the rest of step 6 and step 7. If “NO” then you do need a delayed start time, continue on here.

CALCULATING THE DELAY START

Picture the same clock-face, and see when the firing would have ended if you had pressed **START/STOP** when you planned (i.e. 16 hours from when you want the firing to begin). Now picture how many hours later the firing would have to end, in order to have someone there for the last few hours of this 16-19-hour firing. That “number of hours later” is what to program in for the **Delay Start**.

An example

You are planning to start the program at 7 pm. Your program is going to take minimum 16 hours. 16 hours from 7 pm is 11 am the following day. You plan to get into the kiln room at 9 am. 9 am to 11 am is only two hours. You would need to get there one hour earlier to be there for the last three hours, OR start the program one hour later than 7 pm so that the program completes at 12 pm the following day. You will need to program a one hour delayed start. First you will enter the program, then the preheat, then the delayed start. You will press **START/STOP** at 7 pm, but now a timer will appear and count down the one hour before the rest of the program begins.

ADDING A DELAYED START

1) Press **DELAY** and see dELA, 0.00 flashing over and over.

2) Enter the number of hours and minutes to delay the start for. For example: For a two hour delay press **2**, **0, 0** so it says **2.00**. For a 1 hour and thirty minute delay press **1, 3, 0** so it says **01.30**. Numbers in the display to the right of the decimal represent minutes. Numbers to the left of the decimal represent hours.

3) When the correct number of hours and minutes has been keyed in, press **ENTER**, see **IDLE**

START FIRING

When the correct time to begin the firing arrives, press **START/STOP**. The display will say -ON-, then it will cycle through a sequence showing TC2, and the current temperature in the kiln over and over as it heats.

FIRST FIRING INSTRUCTIONS FOR L&L KILNS WITH A DYNATROL

Here is what to expect the kiln will do based on what you have programmed, after you press **START/STOP**.

If you programmed a delayed start, there will be an hours and minutes timer displayed along with the TC2, current temperature message. It will be displayed until the timer runs out.

It will climb at about 60°F per hour until it reaches 200°F, then the timer will appear again and the three hour preheat will begin counting down on the display with the TC2, current temperature message. It will sit around 200°F until the timer runs out.

Now it will begin to climb at about 80°F per hour up to 250°F

Once the hottest thermocouple reading reaches 250°F, the kiln will begin climbing at 200°F per hour until it reaches 1000°F

Once the hottest thermocouple reading reaches 1000°F, the kiln will begin climbing at 100°F per hour until it reaches 1100°F

Once the hottest thermocouple reading reaches 1100F, the kiln will begin climbing at 180°F per hour until it reaches 1915°F

Once the hottest thermocouple reading reaches 1915°F, the kiln will begin climbing at 80°F per hour until it reaches somewhere between 2100-2190°F

Once the hottest thermocouple reading reaches around 2165°F, the kiln display will say CPLT, a time like 17.47, the **TC2**, and the current temperature in the kiln as it is cooling.

Once CPLT is seen the firing is complete. We recommend shutting all power to the kiln off.

You can also leave the display on with the current messages cycling over and over, or you can press **START/STOP** to get back to IdLE, TC2, current temperature and leave it there.

> **NOTE**: If the first firing ended in an error code please make note of which one it was; i.e. E-1 or E-d etc. See this first:
>
> ***hotkilns.com/list-all-error-codes-dynatrol***

SPLITTING TEST FIRING INTO TWO FIRINGS

This is done by entering in the standard program for the test fire on Day 1, first thing in the morning. Turn this on as early on Day 1 as possible and let it run all day until you go home in the afternoon. Before you go home Press **START/STOP**, then turn off the kiln.

On day 2, first thing in the morning, program in a **SLOW GLAZE** to cone 5, no hold or preheat is necessary. Regardless of how hot it still may be in the kiln, turn this program on as early as possible in the morning on Day 2. It will run up to somewhere between 2100°F and 2190°F in about 7-8 hours. If it is still not done when you go home, as long as 8 hours have passed since you turned it on, you can press **START/STOP** and turn the toggle switch off and go home. Otherwise when it is done it will give the CPLT message and it is then safe to Press **START/STOP**, turn the toggle switch off and go home.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There are ceramic washers in between the elements and the element holders in the corners of my kiln - what are these for?

1. This is done on some kilns - particularly DaVinci kilns. The discs are placed in the element holders to keep the elements from coming out during shipment.
2. It is a good idea to keep them in place during at least the first firing.
3. Once the elements heat up they will seat themselves in the element holders properly and they can be removed.

Can you fire to a higher cone than cone 5 on the first firing?

The Cone 5 temperature target is somewhat arbitrary. We want to accomplish three things with the first firing: 1) fuse the hardening coating we apply to the surface of the brick (which is one reason L&L kilns stay so durable over time) and 2) seat the elements in the holders and 3) put an initial oxide coating on the elements (which protects them from contaminants in the atmosphere form clay and glazes). A higher temperature is not a problem.