

FIRST FIRING INSTRUCTIONS FOR L&L KILNS WITH A ONE-TOUCH™

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 One-Touch™ control.

WHY DO A FIRST 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. 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.

HOW TO DO A FIRST FIRING

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.

See the “BASIC OPERATION OF L&L KILNS WITH A ONE-TOUCH™” for detailed instructions. You can do it in one firing or two firings.

The test fire is done with the kiln empty, or with the new kiln furniture. 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 firings or slow firings.

WHAT TO EXPECT

ELEMENT SMOKING

Brand new elements will 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.

NOISES IN AN AUTOMATIC KILN

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

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the elements. This is normal. The natural properties of electricity and the dynamics of the shape of the element combine to make 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 hairline-crack 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* in the MAINTENANCE section and *troubleshoot-brick.pdf* in the TROUBLESHOOTING section for more information.

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.

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 kiln safety glasses when looking through the peepholes to protect your eyes from infrared radiation.