

Kiln Corner

Overcoming the Fear of Kilns

by Arnold Howard

Photography Courtesy of Paragon Industries, L.P.

Though I work for Paragon Industries, L.P., the information in this column applies to all brands of glass kilns. Feel free to send questions for this column no matter what brand of kiln you own.

I'm still a little scared of my kiln. Is that normal?

Yes, it is normal for a beginner to be afraid of a kiln, but you will soon feel confident enough to offer advice to others. Firing a kiln is like riding a bicycle—it may feel awkward at first, but that is quickly forgotten with experience. If the kiln is installed properly and you monitor the kiln during firing, there is no reason to fear it. The heat is contained safely inside the kiln.

I know of an artist who was afraid to fire her new Paragon kiln until she began firing glass bottles. The bottles were free, so she could experiment all she wanted without worrying about ruining expensive glass. Firing the bottles removed her fear. She now enjoys glass fusing more, because the fear had been a brake on her creativity. So experiment with inexpensive glass in your kiln before investing in your favorite brand of glass.

Perfect a glass design by firing one piece at a time before you fill a kiln with duplicates. A small test kiln takes away the stress of firing a production load in a large kiln.

Some people find digital controllers intimidating. It may be because the manual is so thick. But most of the information in the manual is for reference. For instance, the section on options contains information on advanced features that you may never use.

I'm a little nervous about firing my kiln, because I haven't fired it in a long time. How can I rebuild my confidence?

To help you to take up where you left off the last time you fired your kiln, look through the kiln instruction manual and reread sections that you highlighted the first time you read it. Also reread the safety rules and your kiln notebook. (If you don't have a notebook, it would be a good idea to start a diary where you record discoveries about firing your kiln. A spiral notebook will do, or keep notes in a computer document.)

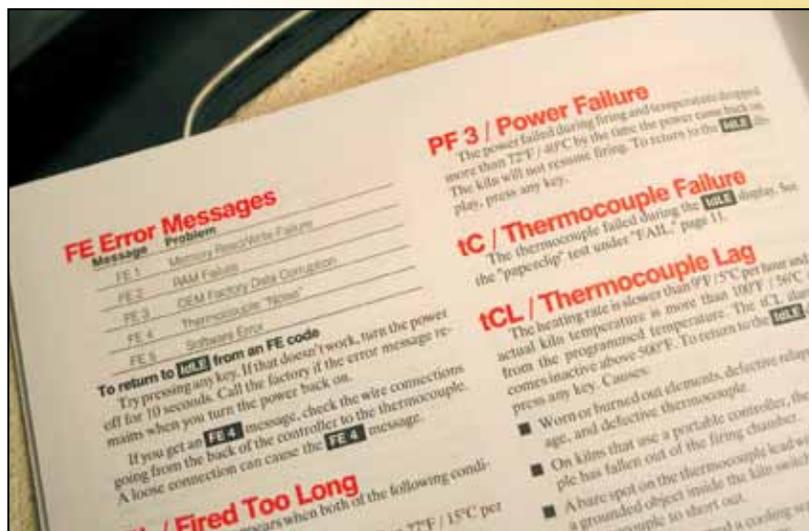
Did your kiln come with a Quick Start card? If so, review the card before firing the kiln. This is especially important for a digital kiln that you don't remember how to program.



Arnold Howard writes instruction manuals and advertisements for Paragon Industries, L.P. His hobbies are glass fusing and karate. He also enjoys studying history and watching classic movies. You can reach Arnold at ahoward@paragonweb.com with questions for future columns. Visit www.paragonweb.com to sign up for his kiln newsletter.



Perfect the firing of single pieces before firing a full load of duplicates. This pendant was fired in a microwave kiln. Notice the silvery sheen, which was created with hairspray.



Don't be intimidated by the amount of information in a digital controller instruction manual. Much of the information is for reference only.

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