

Kiln Corner

A Kiln Maintenance Checklist

by Arnold Howard

Photography Courtesy
of Paragon Industries, L.P.

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

Regular kiln maintenance is an important aspect of making sure that your kiln is working at its best. After every 10 to 15 firings, you should inspect your kiln and perform the following routine maintenance.

1. Make sure the kiln is centered on the stand and that the stand is stable. Before each firing, check all around the kiln to make sure that nothing is touching it. Do not allow anything to lean against the kiln.

2. Remove all flammable materials from around the kiln. Do not store gasoline, paint, or other flammable liquids in the kiln room. Keep these items in a storage shed if your kiln is in the garage. Otherwise you will spend time removing them before each firing. Make sure the kiln is at least 12 inches from the nearest wall.

3. Vacuum the kiln interior and exterior with the brush nozzle. Remember to vacuum the brick grooves. If you have difficulty removing debris from inside the grooves, use a narrow wand-type vacuum cleaner nozzle, being careful to not scrape the kiln walls. Do not vacuum the switch box or allow the nozzle to get close to the thermocouple or controller. The static from the nozzle can damage the controller.

4. If you have a firebrick kiln, check the kiln wash on the bottom for cracks and bare spots in the coating. Remove any melted glass. Reapply kiln wash if needed. Check the kiln walls for glass debris and remove it carefully with a small knife.

5. Check the cord insulation, wall outlet, and plug for heat damage. Has the cord touched the side of the kiln during firing? This will damage the cord insulation. Replace it if it has become damaged. Replace both the cord and wall outlet if either the plug or the outlet shows signs of heat damage.

6. Make sure that the elements are not bulging out of sidewall grooves and repair as necessary.

7. Check the condition of the lid support or spring system and the lid handle. For front loading kilns, lubricate the hinge with graphite if needed. (Do not disassemble the hinge to apply the graphite.)

8. Check the aluminum vent duct for leaks in the kiln downdraft vent.

9. For digital kilns, make sure that the thermocouple extends far enough into the kiln. For 1/4" wide thermocouple the distance should be 1". For a 1/8" wide thermocouple, it should be 5/8".

10. Some final notes: Keep the lid closed when you are not using the kiln. This keeps dust out and prevents the lid from dropping while you are away. Do not store anything besides a shelf inside the kiln, and do not store anything on top.

GPO



Used canned air rather than a vacuum cleaner to remove dust from the inside of a kiln switch box. This is necessary only if you have the switch box open to change parts.



Very gently vacuum the lid of your kiln.

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. Sign up for his kiln newsletter at www.paragonweb.com.

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