

Fires you can turn on with your phone or net

By DENE MACKENZIE

DUNEDIN manufacturer Escea is about to set the world on fire again with its latest release of luxury gas fireplaces, ones that can be controlled through an iPhone or on the internet.

Escea chief executive Nigel Bamford released the new range of fires at the company's Green Island headquarters last night, promising that the locally made fires would again lead the world.

The iPhone app removed the need for the user to have a remote to operate the fire and being connected to the internet meant people could go online and switch their fires on before they left work, having their homes warm when they arrived, he told the *Otago Daily Times*.

An Android phone app was under development.

Using new technology had played a large part in the development of the latest range.

"When we launched in 2005, those fires contained the 'whizz bang' technology of the time. We knew then the business was no different from cars in that we needed to continually update the technology."

In 2005, the fires were the most efficient in the market and Escea believed then it had a six or seven-year lead on competitors before the technology platform needed to be updated.

In the last two years, Escea had spent \$2 million on research and development to develop the technology which the company would use for the next six or seven years to keep ahead of its competitors.

The three things Escea wanted to accomplish with the new range of fires were: energy efficiency to regain the top world ranking; designer fires which offered users choices of fronts and fuel beds; and far more connectivity, Mr Bamford said.

Asked how he came up with the design for the iPhone app



Firing up . . . Escea chief executive Nigel Bamford with the iPhone app that controls the new luxury gas fireplaces. PHOTO: LINDA ROBERTSON

and the internet connectivity, Mr Bamford said Escea kept watching what the rest of the world was doing and saw that

"smart meters" were becoming a trend for monitoring energy use in the home.

The iPhone app fitted into

that trend because owners of the fires could monitor all of the fire functions through their phone, he said.

More than half of the company's products were exported, he said. Last night was the first of seven launches in New Zea-

land and Australia. Next year, Mr Bamford would launch the products in Europe.
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