



Maintaining the Home

Furnace Care

Maintaining the Home: Furnace Care

All heating systems should be checked periodically by a professional. Consult the installation manual for maintenance frequency or ask the dealer who installed the system how often professional inspections are recommended. Generally, oil burning units and heat pumps should be inspected annually; gas fired units and electric furnaces every two to three years.

Inspect the flame color in gas fired units annually. The flame should be primarily bluish in color. If it is yellow or if flames are lifting off the burners, call a professional to adjust the system.

Inspect the walls of the heat exchanger for deterioration, corrosion, debris, soot, mineral deposits or cracks. If any damage is evident, consult a professional to clean or replace the unit, depending upon severity. If the area only needs cleaning, you can perform this task. Ask the heating and cooling contractor to show you how during his/her next visit, or consult the installation manual.

Oil the motor and fan in your forced air heating system at the beginning of and during the heating season. The heating contractor can show you how or consult the furnace installation manual.

Clean or replace the air filter in a forced air heating system. Check the filter monthly during the winter. Consult the installation manual for directions and recommended replacement frequency.

Annually inspect the insulation on heating supply ducts/pipes to insure that it is secure. Refasten any loose insulation.

Check each room in the home for the level of heat output, especially rooms farthest from the furnace/boiler once a year. Uneven heat distribution indicates the system is out of balance. Consult a heating contractor.

Safety/Temperature Controls

Inspect and clean the thermostat annually. Use a soft brush to remove dust and lint. Use soft white paper to clean the contacts. Ask the heating contractor to demonstrate the procedure.

Each year, check to see that the master shutoff switch to the heating system is operational. If it does not shut off the system, consult a professional.

This material was adapted from publications produced by Michigan State University. Michigan State Cooperative Extension publications can be found on the Web at <http://www.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/mud02/01500601.html>.

*This resource is one in a series on **Maintaining the Home** which include:*

Interior Maintenance

Preventive Home Maintenance Checkup
Make a Basic Toolkit for Simple Home Repairs
Selection and Use of Home Cleaning Products
Discovering the Secrets of Successful Storage

Heating

Furnace Care
Fireplace and Chimney Care

Cooling

Evaporative Cooler
Air Conditioner
Ceiling Fans

Plumbing

Fixing Plugged Sink Drains
How to Unclog a Toilet
Repairing Dripping Faucets

Electrical

How to Set or Reset a Circuit Breaker
How to Replace a Fuse

Appliances

How to Buy an Energy Efficient Home Appliance
Choosing a Water Heater

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Dryer Care and Dryer Cleaning
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Refrigerator Care and Refrigerator Cleaning
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Home Exterior

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Exterior Walls, Windows, and Doors

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A Guide To Roofs
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Principles of Xeriscape
Watering Your Lawn

Home Safety

Child-Proofing Your Home
Is Your Home Safe From Fire Hazards?
Smoke Alarms Save Lives
Carbon Monoxide Alarms
Are Your Children Safe From Poisons?
Protecting Yourself Against Burglary

Conservation

Weatherize Your Home
Easy Tips to Save Money and the Planet
How to Stop Air Leaks Around Windows
Energy-Efficient Heating and Cooling
Indoor Water Conservation Tips
Outdoor Water Conservation Tips

Environment Issues

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Reduce-Reuse-Recycle: Alternatives for Waste Management
Create a home recycling center
Healthy Indoor Air for New Mexico Homes
Dealing with Mold
Household Hazardous Waste
Hazardous Household Substances: Alternatives That Are Relatively Free of Toxic Effects
Radon

Pest Control

Cockroaches and Their Control
Southwest Insects

Accessible Living

Update your home for a lifetime of living
Vision Loss & Hearing Loss
Hand Dexterity, Strength and Range of Motion
Cognitive Difficulties
Mobility Impairments, Balance and Coordination

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