



## **CHECK OUT YOUR HEATING SYSTEM**

Each year, as the weather turns colder, it's a good idea to have your heating system checked out by a professional. There are some things, however, that you can do yourself once a year to make sure your furnace or boiler is operating at maximum efficiency (most will be part of a professional inspection):

1. Check the flame on your furnace or boiler (and your hot water heater, too). The flame should be blue, with very little orange or yellow color. An orange flame can indicate that the air/fuel mixture is incorrect, and can result in soot filling up the heat exchanger. (Call a professional to adjust the air/fuel mixture.)
2. Turn off the system and let it cool down. Then, use a stiff brush to scrape clean the blade on the blower fan. Vacuum the blower and burner compartments to remove any dust or other debris.
3. Check all belts for wear and tension. Replace any belt that is cracked or glazed. If the belt on the furnace motor has more than about a half-inch of play, tighten it using the adjusting bolt. If you have an older system without sealed bearings, add some lightweight non-detergent oil to the oil port(s) on the furnace motor and/or blower motor. (Do not oil the belt itself.) Some hot water boilers have a pump that should be oiled periodically.
4. Check the draft system. Open the clean-out door at the bottom of your chimney and remove any ashes that have accumulated there. Hold a mirror inside the cavity and make sure you can see daylight. If your chimney is blocked by a bird's nest or other obstruction, it should be removed. Check the chimney itself, inside and out, to make sure the bricks and the mortar between them are solid and intact.
5. Check the heat delivery system. On forced-air furnaces, make sure all joints in the ductwork are tight and do not allow hot air to escape. (Loose joints can be corrected with sheet metal screws and duct tape.) Insulate any ductwork that travels through unheated areas. If a steam radiator is not heating, you may need to replace a vent. Most hot water radiators should be bled of air at the start of each heating season.

Some maintenance needs to be done more frequently. If you have a boiler with a sight glass, check it every couple of days. (If the water supply to the boiler is not adequate, the boiler can over-heat and explode.) For furnaces, change the filter monthly during the heating system.

Don't forget to check your owner's manual. It will specify the maintenance needs of your particular system.