



Hints For Homeowners

Preparing For Cold Weather

(NAPSA)—You may care to give a warm welcome to these ideas that can help ensure that your home heating system is in tip-top shape to handle the stress that cold weather can place on a home.

Start first by scheduling a clean-and-check service call by a qualified technician. Not only will this preventative maintenance help keep your system operating optimally when you need it most, it can help restore lost efficiency, lower utility bills, minimize repairs, improve capacity and extend the life of your heating equipment. No matter how energy efficient your furnace or heat pump was when it was installed, proper maintenance is needed to keep it that way.

Expert's Advice

"When looking for a heating, ventilation and air-conditioning [HVAC] contractor, it's important to ensure they have the proper credentials," explains Tom Archer, heating product manager, Carrier.

Leading residential contractors gain their certification from three principal organizations: the North American Technician Excellence program (NATE), the Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) or the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association (SMACNA).

"If the contractor you've found is certified by one or more of these organizations, you've found a reputable business," continues Archer. "In addition, ask your friends and neighbors who they've worked with in the past and how they fared with the experience."

Understanding The Inspection

Once you've selected a rep-



A professional heating system technician can help you keep your home comfortable and your heating bills affordable.

utable contractor, schedule an appointment to have your home comfort system inspected. This inspection should include checks to ensure that airflow and drainage are unobstructed and monitors and electrical connections are functioning properly. A qualified contractor will also check all components of the equipment, and inspect the ignition mechanism, the flue draft and indoor airflow for maximum efficiency and the burner assembly and heat exchangers to ensure all heating components are working to capacity. Lastly, the technician will clean and lubricate all necessary parts.

Following the furnace inspection, the technician will also inspect any indoor air quality components you may have, including air purifiers or humidifiers and ventilators. The contractor will then test the thermostat calibration and conduct start-and-run testing to be sure your system is responding properly to what your

house needs. Once testing is complete, the technician will confirm that the safety controls are working and effective.

The final step of the visit should be the replacement of the furnace filter, as needed. Filter replacement is a key factor in ensuring efficient furnace operation. Not only does your furnace need clean air to function correctly, the filter is an important part of cleaning the air going into your home. Plus, a dirty filter can restrict airflow and could cause the furnace to overheat and shut down.

How Often Should You Change Your Filter?

"Well, that depends," says Archer. "For instance, thick, highly pleated filters can trap particles and contaminants for a longer period of time than thinner filters; similarly, furnaces with air filters may only need to be changed once or twice a year. However, if you use your furnace fan all year long to circulate air or if you have pet hair and dander in your home, then you may need to change the filter more frequently. Your technician will be able to assess the type of filter in your system and outline a schedule for you to check and replace it throughout the year."

There is a lot to consider when preparing for the cold, but with the help of a credentialed, qualified technician, it can be a simple, straightforward process, and one that can keep your home comfort system running efficiently and properly throughout the year.

Further Facts

To learn more, visit www.carrier.com.