

HOUSING NEWSLETTER

FALL ISSUE | 2020

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Furnace Maintenance

Now that the cold weather is upon us, our furnaces are more relied upon to maintain a comfortable temperature within the home and to protect the home from potential damage to the water supply.

When the furnace malfunctions, any one of it's three (3) components may be causing the problems. Source, Distribution System or Thermostat.

We have put this newsletter together to assist families to perform preventative maintenance and to perform initial basic inspections to their furnaces if the furnace has failed.

REMEMBER:

These instructions are basic procedures that the homeowner can perform. At no time should the homeowner attempt to service the electrical or gas components of a furnace.



Believe it or not many of the trouble calls we respond to are a result of common problems that many homeowners oversee or simply are not aware about.

- The power supply shut-off switch looks identical to a normal light switch. Many times this switch accidentally gets shut off.
- Furnace filters are clogged. It is easy to forget about changing the filter, yet a clogged filter will in fact shut down the furnace.
- Thermostats get hit off the wall or are tilted off-level. Thermostat must be mounted flush and level on the wall for proper operation.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Digital vs Mercury Thermostats

Furnace Filters

Dangerous Sources of Temporary Heat



Preventative Maintenance of Your Furnace

VENTS

Furnaces require a continuous source of return air in order to function properly. There are two sets of vents in your home:

Heating and Cooling Vents - supply your home with warm air in the winter and cool air in the summer if you have air conditioning.

Return Air Vents - pulls air from your home back to furnace to heat it and supply the home with warm air through the heat vents.

FILTERS

Your filters are important in this operation because they help to clean the air before heating it and putting it back in the home as warm air. This is why it is important to change your filters regularly.

Make sure you purchase the right size filter. The size is identified on the outside edges of any filter and they can be purchased at any hardware store, Canadian Tire, or Walmart.

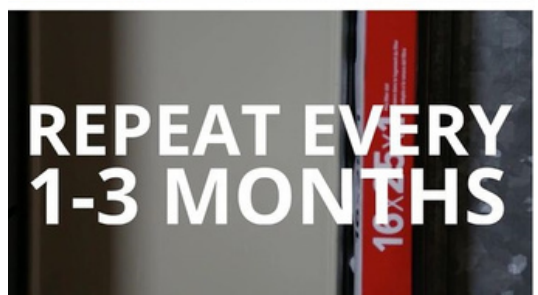
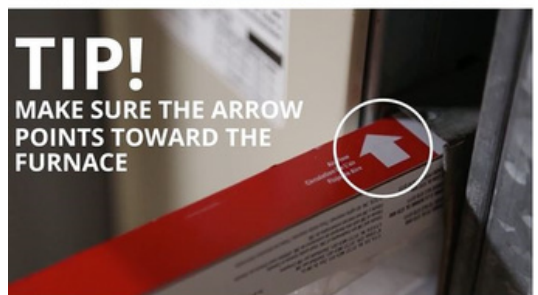
In a pinch, filters can be vacuumed to be used until new ones can be purchased.

A true sign that your furnace is starving for air is when the furnaces "cycles on and off" but will not ignite or blow any heat.

When you replace filters it is also important to make sure the filter is inserted with the ARROW on the filter pointing toward the furnace.

This is for proper airflow through the filter. Compare it with the air filter being removed.

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR AIR FILTER



Condensation Tube

Some newer furnaces come with a condensation tube - a clear plastic rubber tube or a white plastic pipe running from the furnace along the floor. This tube should be running to a floor drain line to allow condensation to be drained away from the furnace system.

It should **NOT** be pinched or kinked in any way. A **clogged** condensation tube line can cause the furnace to stop working (furnace will not ignite or blow air). Check the tube to ensure water is running through it freely and that it is not kinked or pinched.



Some furnaces have a condensation pump attached to the condensation hose. It is also important to make sure this device is plugged in and functioning.

This device is used to pump condensate away from the furnace to a drainage location. But if that water ends up on your floor, that's a sign that there may be an issue with your furnace.

Let's look at some of those issues that can cause your condensing furnace to start leaking water:

- A clog or problem in the condensate system.
- Problems with the condensate pump.
- A leaky humidifier.
- A bad heat exchanger.

Exterior Venting

Another important item to monitor and maintain is the exterior exhaust vents from the furnace. In the winter months, these lines can become blocked with snow and ice because of the warm air being exhausted from the furnace into the cold air. During the summer they can become blocked with leaves, debris and dirt from wind, rodents, and children.

This blockage will also cause the furnace to shut down. Homeowners should keep an eye on these exterior pipes to make sure they are always free and clear. If you notice ice forming on these pipes, contact the maintenance department if you need assistance removing it.

Remember: children should be reminded not to insert anything into these pipes and to avoid playing around them at all times.





DIGITAL THERMOSTAT

These are becoming more frequently used by homeowners as a way to conserve on gas or propane. They are programmable to allow the thermostat setting to be lowered when no one is home or in the evening and raised while occupants are normally home.

While some operate off the voltage in the thermostat wires and have a battery back up in the event of a power failure, most operate off the battery power and should be checked. They are an effective means of energy conservation and are becoming a standard installation practice.

There are also thermostats that can be monitored through your mobile device. They are costly, but they do pay for themselves through their cost-saving effectiveness.

Regardless of what style you have in your home, they should never be covered with clothing or furniture. Your thermostat should be a device that you set and forget; if your furnace stops functioning, check to see if your thermostat screen is blank. If so, change the batteries.

If you find that you are always having to raise the temperature to provide more heat, there is likely something else causing the problem. This is when your home should be inspected to determine where heat is escaping.

Thermostats

Thermostats come in many styles but they all have the same function.

To monitor temperature to the room and either activate heat or cooling to regulate the temperature to the adjusted setting. However, there are important things about the thermostat that homeowners need to remember.

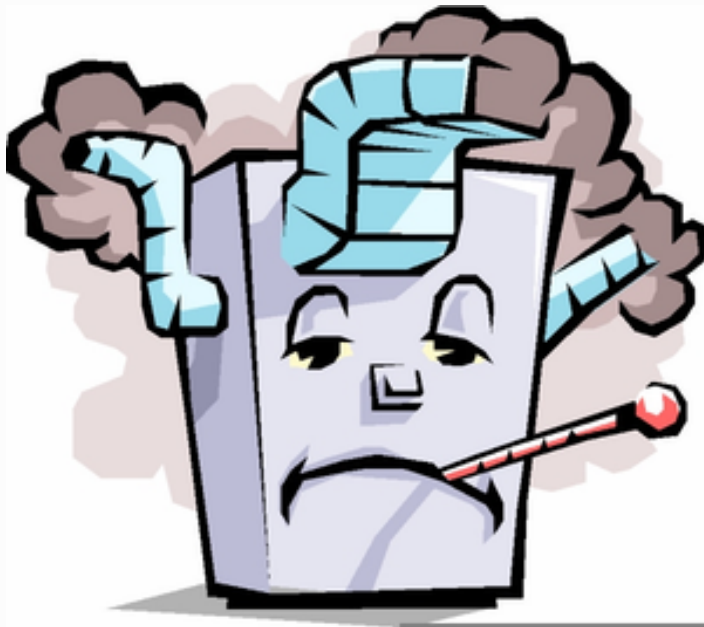
Our homes use 2 types of thermostats to control our furnaces and air conditioners.

MERCURY THERMOSTAT

This type of thermostat operates using a small amount of mercury in a glass tube which acts as the switch to turn the furnace on or off. As the room temperature changes it causes the glass tube attached to it to move left or right.

If you have this style of thermostat, it is very important to make sure the thermostat remains both level and fastened to the wall or it will not function properly, or at all because it relies on the mercury to be able to roll back and forth in the tube.





Furnace Failure - What to Do

The best preventative measure to ensure your furnace will run efficiently is to have it serviced and cleaned annually.

Having your furnace serviced could help to identify major components that are potentially breaking down. It also allows the homeowner time to make arrangements to have these items replaced in advance rather than finding out in the middle of the night.



IF YOUR FURNACE FAILS:

Check the items as discussed in this informational newsletter. If all basic items fail to get your furnace to activate, contact the Housing Department's On-Call line at **(807) 633-3959**.

Having an alternate source of heat is always a good idea. Electric Portable heaters are inexpensive and good to have as an emergency source.

Propane heaters should NEVER be used as a source of temporary heat in a home.

In some circumstances, such as a break down over the weekend or a power failure it may result in a temporary relocation to a family members home.

If you suspect your furnace faulty, making abnormal noises, or cycling off and on continuously. Contact the housing on-call line to report it.

Remember as homeowners, we all have responsibility to make sure preventative measures are taken to avoid inconveniences.





Qualified Contractors for Furnace Repair

Task Energy (807) 627-4189

Kemp Mechanical (807) 473-7999

Thermal Mechanical (807) 345-5200

Clow Darling (807) 623-7485

Robert's Plumbing & Heating (807) 345-9353



**** NOTE:** The Fort William First Nation Housing Department **WILL NOT** issue reimbursements for service calls that are not initiated by the Department, or it's staff. Homeowner's will be responsible for the costs associated with their service call. *******



FWFN HOUSING

(807) 633-3959



Internet Help

There are many Internet sites that help explain the procedures for changing your filter. Going to **www.youtube.com** and typing in **Changing your furnace filters** will take you to many videos on this topic.

There are also videos on the other topics that have been discussed in this newsletter such as the operation of a thermostat and drain lines from the condensate pump.

Remember: Some videos demonstrate specific details of **Troubleshooting** a furnace. **DO NOT attempt any servicing of the internal components of your furnace. This area contains both electricl and gas components which should only be inspected and serviced by a certified furnace technician.**