Have Annual Check-ups for Routine Maintenance

Have a heating contractor perform a yearly maintenance check-up of your equipment and venting system to ensure efficient, safe operation. Adjustments, cleaning of burners, replacement of parts, repairs, and venting inspections are jobs for licensed professionals who know the equipment and the codes that must be followed.

Between annual check-ups here are some things you can do to help keep your heating system working efficiently:

- Make sure the heating system is turned off before you do anything. If your system has a pump, make sure the pump is also turned off.
- At the beginning of each heating season, bleed off air from the system. Each radiator will have a bleed valve (usually at the top) that can be opened by a knob or by using a screwdriver to turn counter clockwise. (The bleed valve of a convector unit may be hidden behind a metal panel which must be unscrewed and removed.) Have a container handy to catch any water that comes out. Escaping air will cause a hissing or spluttering sound. As soon as a steady stream of water comes out, turn off the valve.
- Before turning the system back on, check that the boiler or expansion tank is filled to the proper level.
- Wipe or vacuum radiators if they are dusty.
- Do not place shelves or furniture where they will block heat from a radiator or convector unit.

Some Tips on Furnace and Boiler Maintenance

The start of fall is ideal for outdoor sports, back-to-school activities and tackling furnace repair and maintenance issues. Better to repair when it's nice out than when it's freezing outside.

There are some instances when you don't need an expert to give your furnace expert care. Here are some things you can handle yourself:

- Confirm that the furnace/boiler comes on and turns off via your thermostat by setting the temperature higher than the current indoor temperature and setting the system to heating mode.
- Check the temperature of your supply air grates or radiant system to ensure you're able to feel warmth.
- If you have an older thermostat, which could have liquid mercury switches, clean and level it to ensure proper functioning.
- Check all visible wiring and electrical connections for signs of damage like burns, unraveling wires and loose nuts.
- Check your vent-connection pipe and chimney for rust or gaps—venting system parts can deteriorate over time.
- If you have a gas or oil furnace as part of your heating system, make sure you have a clean and properly sized filter in place.

- At the start-up of your system each fall, an inspection of the burners, combustion area, venting and even flame appearance is advised. For gas furnaces, an inspection of the air intake and winterization is needed.

Sometimes there are instances when you need an expert. During a boiler service call, your service expert will typically:
- Check the unit and its physical support for any obvious signs of deterioration.
- Check the system's operation to determine its condition and if repairs or adjustments are needed.
- Inspect all flue gas passages and venting.
- Inspect and clean (as needed) the pilot/ignition system, burner assembly and combustion area.
- Check and clean the gas/oil valve.
- Check all gas or oil connections, gas/oil pressure and burner combustion.
- Check for secure physical connections of individual parts.
- Make sure all electrical connections are sound and components are working properly.
- Check the control or thermostat for functionality.

If you have a gas furnace, your service expert will also:
Inspect and clean (as needed) the heat exchangers coupling box(es) and inducer assembly.
- Lubricate moving parts and motors (if applicable).
- Check and clean the condensate drainage system for condensing gas furnaces.
- Clean and adjust the blower components.
- Check supply and return air ducts for obstructions, leaks and insulation and remedy any problems.
- Inspect and make any necessary adjustments to the return-air duct connection(s) at the furnace.
- Check the filters, and replace or clean them, if needed.