

Improve heating systems during summer

Days are getting longer and the temperature is creeping up. The end of the heating season is finally in sight.



Since this is also the end of this series of columns, the folks at the Energy Solutions Centre and Yukon Housing Corporation have come up with some suggestions for maintaining and upgrading heating and ventilation systems during the summer down time.

Because heating systems don't operate as often in the summer, and because access to underground components is easier when the ground is thawed, summer is the best time for the general maintenance and repair of heating and ventilation systems. Some of this maintenance you can do yourself, but other jobs should be left to the professional. A complete maintenance checklist is available at Yukon Housing.

Professional maintenance includes cleaning or replacing air and fuel filters; checking heat exchangers for cleanliness or cracking; checking heating and ventilation controls, thermostats, zone valves, and more. A professional will also check for cracks and replace any faulty seals or gaskets in the chimney system. This is particularly important for woodstoves and sidewall-vented heating appliances.

Homeowners can look after the general clean up of some of the system's components. For

example, indoors, make sure to clean the supply and exhaust grills of heating and ventilation systems, and vacuum dirt and debris from floor grills, heat registers, and radiators. Outdoors, clear lint, dirt, seeds, bugs, and debris from air supply and exhaust hoods, and check flappers to make sure they operate freely and close properly.

Also, it's a good idea to keep your fuel tank full during the summer. Less air in the tank means less chance of moisture from condensation, and that reduces the chance of internal corrosion. Adding a fuel conditioner will also help reduce the accumulation of moisture and prevent the growth of algae. Visually inspect outside fuel tanks for leaks or corrosion.

Servicing the fuel system, however, is a job for the professional,



particularly if there's any sign of leaking fuel. Spilled fuel oil is a danger to humans and the environment.

If the furnace seemed to turn on and off a lot in the winter, even when it was -42°C outside, it might be too big for the house. If it is hard to find parts because the furnace is so old, it might be time to look for something newer.

The best way to find out what improvements are required for your heating and ventilation systems is to have an EnerGuide evaluation done on your home. An EnerGuide evaluation indicates the best ways to conserve heat energy from something as simple as improving the seals around doors and windows, to increasing insulation or changing the furnace. These changes will make the house more comfortable, and reduce heating costs.

The \$99 evaluation also provides an indication of how quickly these improvements will pay for themselves. Yukon Housing can provide a list of energy advisors who can conduct these evaluations.

Some problems have little to do with the furnace and more to do with how heat is distributed through the house.

Signs of poor heat distribution and ventilation are: drafts; variable heat throughout the house (some rooms are too hot and others too cold); condensation on the inside of windows; musty

smells; and mildew. A professional can review the heat distribution and ventilation systems and identify what can be improved.

Regular maintenance should ensure the safe operation of your heating system. If you smell furnace exhaust gases in the house, or if there are signs of black soot anywhere on the furnace or flue pipe, the chimney, exhaust and ventilation systems should be checked by a professional knowledgeable about both heating and ventilation issues. Exhaust gases are hazardous to your health and can be fatal.

If your furnace or other heating appliance is inside the house or you have an attached garage, you should install a carbon monoxide detector to warn you when carbon monoxide levels are dangerous.

This summer, while your heating system is taking a break, give it a tune up. Visit Yukon Housing (www.housing.yk.ca) or the Energy Solutions Centre (www.nrgsc.yk.ca) for more tips on heating your home efficiently.

This column was prepared on behalf of the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources Energy Solutions Centre.