

## 10 Tips for Safe, Efficient Operation of Your Heating Equipment

- Don't try to adjust automatic vent dampers, heat reclaiming devices, or safety controls on your heating equipment. If your equipment doesn't operate properly, call a qualified service company for a safety check and needed repairs.
- When buying new equipment, check the label plate for certification. This is your assurance that the equipment is designed to meet national safety standards.
- Have heating equipment installed by a qualified heating contractor to ensure it's properly connected.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the proper operation and care of your equipment.
- Make sure your chimney and flue are kept clean.
- Inspect the vent pipe for rust. Replace it if corrosion has created a hole.
- Check furnace filters regularly and clean or replace them if dirty. Check belts for wear.
- Keep equipment and burner area free of dust, dirt, and debris.
- Keep the furnace unit intact. Don't remove panels without replacing them.
- Use equipment for the job it was designed to do. Never use a cooking range top or oven to heat your home.



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## Be Sure of Your Heating Equipment

Heating safety begins with safe equipment. Use only certified heating equipment designed to meet national safety standards. Have a professional heating contractor assess your needs and recommend the type and size of system you should use. Size is one of the most important factors affecting the efficiency of heating systems. Bigger isn't always better. Look for ENERGY STAR® units that have an efficiency rating of 90 or higher.

## Proper Venting is Important

For your safety, a professional heating contractor can make sure that your equipment is properly vented and adjusted, and that it has an adequate supply of fresh air for safe, efficient operation.

If your equipment is vented through a chimney with a cleanout opening, make sure the opening is covered with a cap. And if you're converting to natural gas from another heating fuel such as coal or oil, be sure to have your flue and chimney cleaned to remove any deposits left by the old fuel.

## Maintain Your Furnace Properly

Heating systems need regular inspection and service to keep them operating efficiently and safely. Have your furnace checked by a qualified heating service contractor, clean or replace your furnace filter regularly according to the manufacturer's recommendations, and keep the cleanout opening clear of leaves and other debris. Simple steps could save your life.

## Be Alert to Conditions That Create Carbon Monoxide

Even though natural gas doesn't contain carbon monoxide, the colorless and odorless gas can be produced when there's not enough oxygen present for natural gas, oil, or any other fuel to burn properly. A vehicle left idling in an enclosed garage can produce enough carbon monoxide to cause illness. In fact, more than two-thirds of accidental deaths from carbon monoxide are caused by poorly vented vehicle exhaust, and by coal, kerosene, or wood burned in a fireplace or stove that's not vented properly. With tighter construction and weatherization features, newer homes can also create poor venting conditions that keep fresh air from aiding proper combustion, especially during the winter heating season.

## Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are often confused with the flu. Such as:

- headache
- dizziness
- nausea/vomiting
- drowsiness
- shortness of breath
- unclear thinking
- loss of coordination
- unconsciousness

## What to Do

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Get into fresh air immediately.
- Call 911 and seek immediate medical attention.
- After the victim is taken care of, call a qualified contractor to locate the cause of the problem and make necessary repairs.

For more information, visit [ColumbiaGasMD.com](http://ColumbiaGasMD.com)