

13 Steps to Prevent Furnace Repair



This is Minnesota. Wintertime is cold here! Do you really want your furnace to go out in January or February? Didn't think so. Well, you can do something about that. You can perform some basic maintenance and ensure that you don't need furnace repair. The tasks listed here will take less than three hours to accomplish, only cost you a few bucks and you'll only need some basic hand tools. A child could do it, if shown how. That's a pretty small price to pay for a winter of warmth and coziness.

1. Take off the combustion chamber door

Cut off the power. Pull the combustion chamber door up and out. Then take off the burner cover, if there is one. That usually means just taking out two screws.

2. Check the burner flames

Turn the power switch back on. Then turn up the thermostat to activate the burners. Be sure the flames are blue and even. You don't want yellow flames. That would mean dirty burners. If the burners need adjusting, call a pro. Don't try it yourself.

3. Vacuum out the burner and cavities

Turn the power back off and give the gas switch a quarter turn to shut it off. Vacuum the burners and the bottom of the furnace. Wherever there's dust, vacuum it up. Use your flashlight to look for soot. Vacuum it up. Then take off the blower door (lower door) and vacuum there, as well.

4. Remove the blower and clean it

Take out the blower so you can clean it. You might have a control panel in front of the blower. If so, remove two screws and just let it hang there. Then use a 7/16-in. socket and ratchet to remove the two bolts holding the blower. Lift the blower out.

5. Carefully vacuum and brush the blower blades

Vacuum blower blades and clean with a small brush. If you can't clean thoroughly, don't do it. You might throw the balance off.

6. Replace the furnace filter

Change the filter every one to three months. A \$1 filter will do the trick. Better filters can restrict the airflow.

7. Blow dust from the pilot

Blow dust off the pilot. Use a straw so you can get right to the spot.

8. Thoroughly clean the flame sensor

Take the flame sensor out of its bracket and clean the surface with fine emery cloth, and then put the sensor back in the bracket. If left uncleaned, the residue could prevent the furnace from lighting.

9. Carefully dust the hot surface igniter without touching it

Use the straw technique to blow dust off the hot surface igniter while still in place. It breaks very easily, so don't touch it, even when replacing the furnace doors.

10. Check the drive belt

Check the belt drive for cracked or frayed belts. You can pick one up for about \$5. Set the tension so it deflects $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

11. Oil the bearings if necessary

If you have an older furnace, you'll have two motor bearings and two motor shaft bearings that need annual attention. Clean around the oil caps and then remove them. You'll need to add two or three drops of lightweight machine oil, then put the caps back on. Don't overdo the oil!

12. Adjust dampers if you have some

Are your furnace ducts also used as air-conditioning ducts? If so, you'll have dampers for seasonal adjusting. The seasons are marked, so set accordingly.

13. Stop leaks in air ducts

Got some leaky ducts? Seal with special metal tape or high temperature silicone. Conduct a backdrafting test. Here's how: Change the thermostat so that the burners come on. Light a stick of incense and, while it's smoking, hold it next to the draft hood. The smoke should be drawn into the hood. While you're at it, check out the exhaust pipes of the furnace and water heater. If you see any white powdery residue, call a pro to fix it.

An ounce of prevention goes a long way. This process should protect you for a warm winter. But, if your system has issues that create problems during the cold winter months, the solution is to call Schwantes, the go to company for furnace repair for all of your heating and air-conditioning needs. We understand what going the extra mile means and why it's so important when the weather outside is typical for Minnesota in the winter.