

## **Avoiding a Furnace Fiasco**

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that heating equipment is the leading cause of home fires during winter, and trails only cooking equipment the rest of the year. Protect your home and family by having your furnace cleaned and inspected every year and installing a carbon monoxide detector.

### **Annual furnace inspection**

- The exhaust vent should be clear of obstructions such as leaves or animal nests.
- The blower motor should be clean.
- The V-belt and pulleys should not show any wear.
- The air intake should be clear so air can pass freely to the furnace.
- The thermostat should be clean and in good working condition.
- The flue assembly should be properly aligned and rigid.
- The flue should be securely attached to the furnace collar.
- The wiring near the flue should be tight.
- The flue pipe, fuel lines, safety controls and burner should be clean and in good working condition.
- If the owner's manual calls for it, the technician should oil the motor and bearings.

Increase the energy-efficiency of your furnace by replacing or cleaning the filters three or four times a year.

### **Eliminate hazards**

- Keep the area around your furnace clean and free from debris. Keep a 36" clearance around the furnace.
- Never store combustible materials such as paint thinner or gasoline near your furnace or vent pipe.
- Never drape clothes over your furnace to dry.

### **How to Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

Your furnace—and any heater that burns fuel—can leak carbon monoxide. Although it is a natural byproduct of the incomplete combustion that makes your furnace work, carbon monoxide can be deadly. The Centers for Disease Control estimates it leads to the deaths of more than 500 Americans each year.

- Carbon Monoxide is odorless, colorless and tasteless.
- You cannot distinguish carbon monoxide in your home unless you install a carbon monoxide detector.
- Check the detector's battery twice a year when you change your clocks, the same time you check your smoke detector batteries.

Contact an Erie Insurance Agent for more information about protecting your home, possessions and family from the impact of a fire.