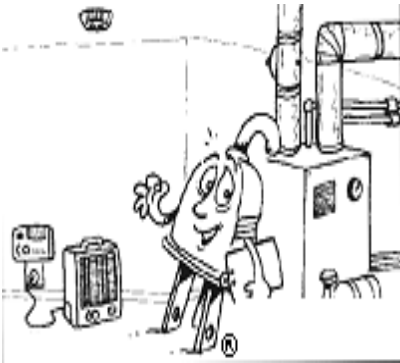


Winter Safety Tips



(NAPS)-To help ensure a safe and warm heating season, many experts recommend an annual inspection and tune-up of home heating systems before temperatures begin to drop.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International offers the following tips:

- Have your heating systems inspected by a qualified service professional at least once a year. This inspection should include lubrication and cleaning, replacing filters, a check of belts and thermostats and having vents cleared of obstructions, as necessary.
- Make sure window air conditioners do not allow cold air to sneak through or around sides, top and bottom, putting an extra strain on heating systems and adding cost for homeowners. Local hardware stores can provide covers and other easy, low-cost ways to keep that cold air out.
- Caulking around windows and other openings can stop the cold air invasion dead in its tracks. Caulking and a caulking gun from your local hardware are inexpensive and easy to use. A warmer home and lower utility bills can result.
- Use products only for their intended purposes. Hair dryers aren't intended to thaw frozen pipes, dry clothing or warm bedding.
- When using a portable electric heater, keep flammable materials - bedding, clothing, draperies, rugs and furniture - at least three feet away even if it has safety features such as cut-off switches or heating element guards.
- If you use an electric blanket to keep warm on a cold night, follow the manufacturers instructions and make sure you turn it off and unplug it when it's not in use. Never tuck an electrical blanket in.