HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

How To Identify Furnace Deficiencies

(NAPSA)—For many homeowners, heating costs are a major expense throughout the cold-weather months. No matter what you do to reduce those costs, if you have an inefficient furnace, your energy bills are going to be higher than necessary. But before you decide to replace an older unit, it's important to consider the options and what is most appropriate for your residence.

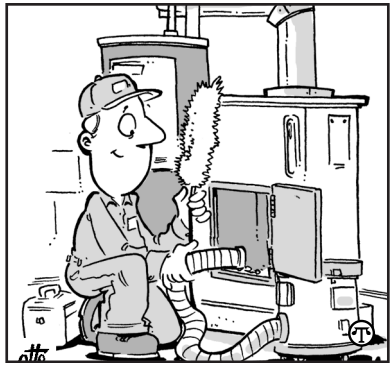
Furnace types

There are three types of furnaces: conventional, mid-efficiency and high-efficiency. The differences among the three furnaces are measured by how much generated heat stays in a house. A mid-efficiency furnace has an efficiency of 80 to 89 percent. A high-efficiency furnace has an efficiency of 90 percent or higher.

Although conventional furnaces are no longer being made, many older homes still use them. Yet many homeowners are choosing to replace older furnaces simply because they are not energy efficient (efficiency ratings average about 60 percent). For example, a standing pilot light burns gas even when the furnace is not running, even during the summer.

Get a home inspection

Most people tend to just think of home inspections as part of the home-buying process. But according to Pillar To Post, North America's leading provider of home inspection services, getting your current home inspected can provide plenty of essential, expert information about the state of your residence—including the furnace—and what you can do to make it more cost efficient.



An efficient furnace can be a key part of reducing overall energy consumption and costs.

Energy efficiency

If energy efficiency is your No. 1 priority, then a high-efficiency furnace is what you want in your home, as it provides more heat for your heating dollar. However, high-efficiency furnaces are more expensive to buy and more expensive to maintain and repair. On the other hand, a mid-efficiency furnace can only extract so much energy, but this limitation might not be a big concern in a smaller home.

"In a tight, well-insulated home or in mild climates, there is little benefit in spending the extra money for a high-efficiency furnace since the energy savings is only about $50 per year," explains Dan Steward, president of Pillar To Post. "In the long term, the high-efficiency furnace may not save a client much money when considering the initial investment and the small reduction in energy costs."

For more information, visit www.pillartopost.com.