

The Energy Savers

by Richard Charles

Your end of the pipeline

Most of us in Canada heat our homes with oil or natural gas and waste at least 10% of that fuel in the process. This means not only that valuable resources are disappearing faster than need be, but a lot of people are robbing themselves through paying for fuel that did them no good. You can go a long way toward plugging the leak if you take a few moments to find out how your heating system works, and take a little trouble to see that it has proper care and maintenance. Here's a brief introduction to the subject.

Most oil furnaces work by shooting oil droplets from a nozzle and burning them in air. When things are going properly, the oil burns completely and uses a minimum of air, so that it makes hardly any smoke and leaves very little soot. If you open the inspection flap in the front of the furnace, you can see if there's smoke on the tip of the flame, and if soot is collecting.

Also take a look at the damper, which you will find in the pipe between the furnace and the chimney. This damper should open and shut freely in a draft caused by the wind. It lets in cool air from the basement which helps to stop too much warm air from the furnace escaping up the chimney.

With gas furnaces, the heat comes from a burner in the form of a single jet or in a cluster similar to the jets on a gas stove. The gas is ignited in air by a pilot light. If this is to work properly, you should watch for three things in particular. First, see that the air intakes in the sides of the furnace are not blocked. Second, make sure that the pilot light is always burning, except in summer of course. Third, check often to see if the flame from the burner is blue. If there is any yellow in the flame, it's getting too much air and the air nozzle needs regulating.

For efficient burning, the gas flow valve and pressure regulator need to be correctly adjusted too. All of the adjustments that have to be made to a gas furnace need an expert. So call your gas company.

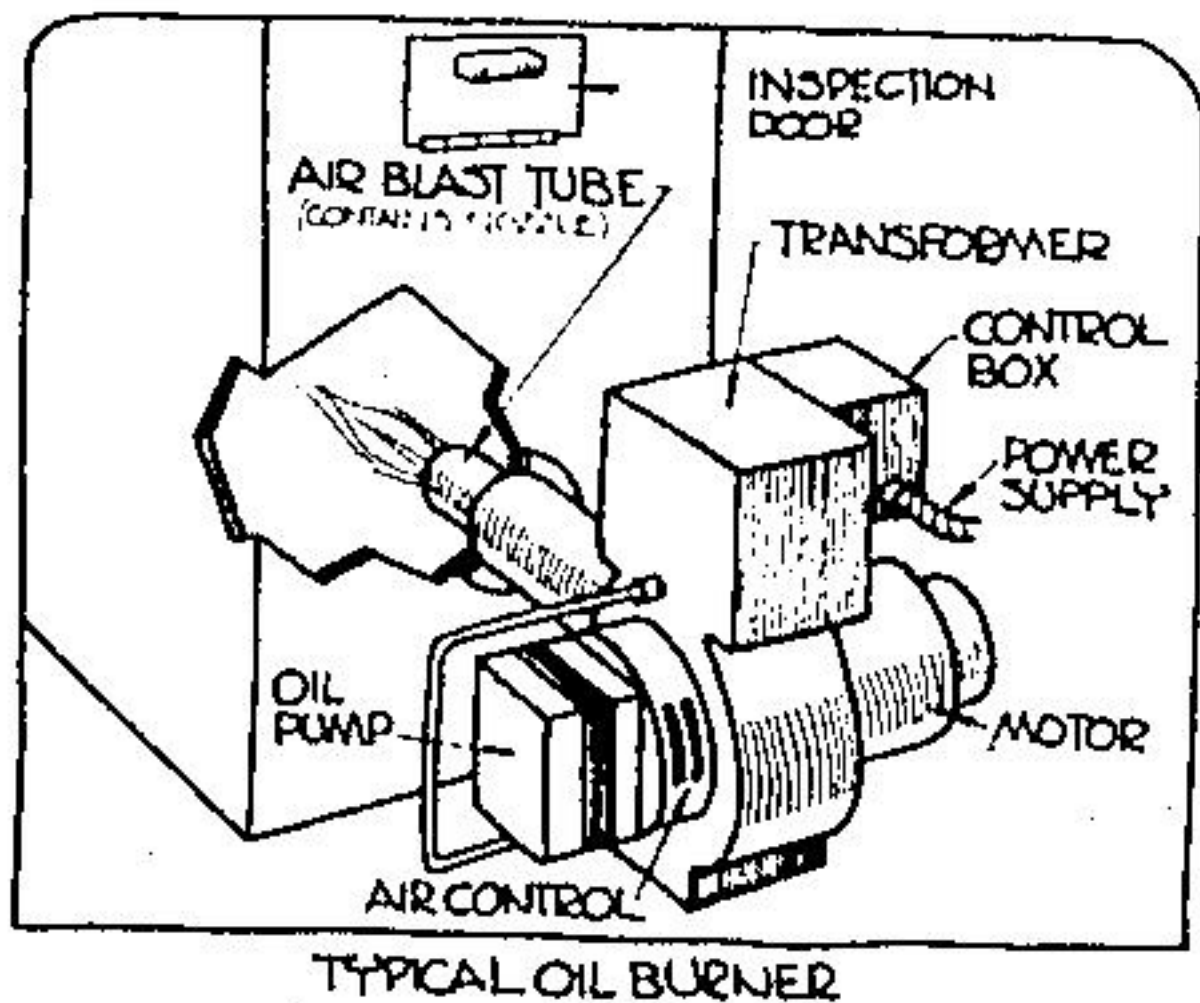
You can save about 10% on the fuel bill if you have the oil furnace and burner cleaned and tuned at least once a year by a qualified serviceman. The items needing attention include the combustion chamber, burner adjustments, oil nozzle, oil filter and gaskets, oil pump, flue, smoke pipe, chimney system, internal surfaces of the furnace, fan and electrical equipment. Make sure your serviceman tests the efficiency and reports it to you.

For gas heating, a serviceman should also carry out a complete check once a year. The components of a gas furnace requiring maintenance include the combustion chamber, heat exchanger, pilot light, filters, fan, chimney system and exterior.

Other ways to keep yourself snug while still saving energy are by having a furnace of the right size and type for your home but that's another story and by making sure that the heat circulates properly throughout your home which is yet another story. These will be discussed in future "Energy Savers" columns.

You can learn more about furnaces and their maintenance by writing to Box 3500, Station C, Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4G1, for a copy of The billpayer's guide to furnace servicing. This gives up-to-date information compiled by the Office of Energy Conservation, Department of Energy Mines and Resources.

As you will discover, there's much you can do yourself to keep your furnace on the top line, but don't try to take the place of a professional serviceman. Unless you really know your stuff, your efforts could prove costly, and even dangerous.



TYPICAL OIL BURNER

OPEN UP THE CLASSIFIEDS FOR MORE PRACTICAL ADVICE

Repair your own windows

Ah, the sounds of summer... birds singing, children playing, balls bouncing, windows shattering.

Broken windows seem to go hand in hand with summer activity, but fortunately for the home handyman, replacing window panes is a simple task.

The materials needed are glazier's points, putty or glazing compound, linseed oil or thinned exterior paint, sandpaper and of course a pane of glass. The glass should be double strength, cut 1/8 inch smaller in length and width than the pane opening.

For tools, you require a

soldering iron or torch with soldering head, a chisel, putty knife or screwdriver, and a glass cutter if you're cutting the glass yourself.

"Before you repair that shattered pane, take a look at your other windows and replace all damaged ones, even those with minor cracks, at the same time," says Michael C. Hammar, a home improvement consultant and spokesman for the 1978 Do It Yourself Exhibition. "It could help prevent valuable heat loss next winter."

To repair a sash window, first take out the broken glass and remove the old putty from around the opening. If

the putty is too brittle to chip off, soften it with a soldering iron or torch with soldering head.

Next, remove the glazier's heads and dig out the bedding putty with a screwdriver, being careful not to damage the groove. Sand the groove smooth and apply linseed oil or thinned exterior paint as a barrier against oil absorption from the new putty.

Put a thin coat of putty along all four sides of the opening to protect the glass from stress and leakage and press the new pane against it.

With the edge of a chisel, screwdriver or putty knife, gently drive the glazier's

points halfway into the sash at 4 to 6 inch intervals around the perimeter of the opening.

Roll the putty into a rope 3/8 inch in diameter and place along the edges of the pane. Draw a putty knife along the rope, flattening it into a smooth triangular shape. Allow it to dry for at least one week before painting it.

Tips on other common household repairs will be given by Michael C. Hammar at the Do It Yourself Exhibition, to be held from September 28 to October 1 in the Industry Building, Coliseum at Toronto's Exhibition Place.

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