

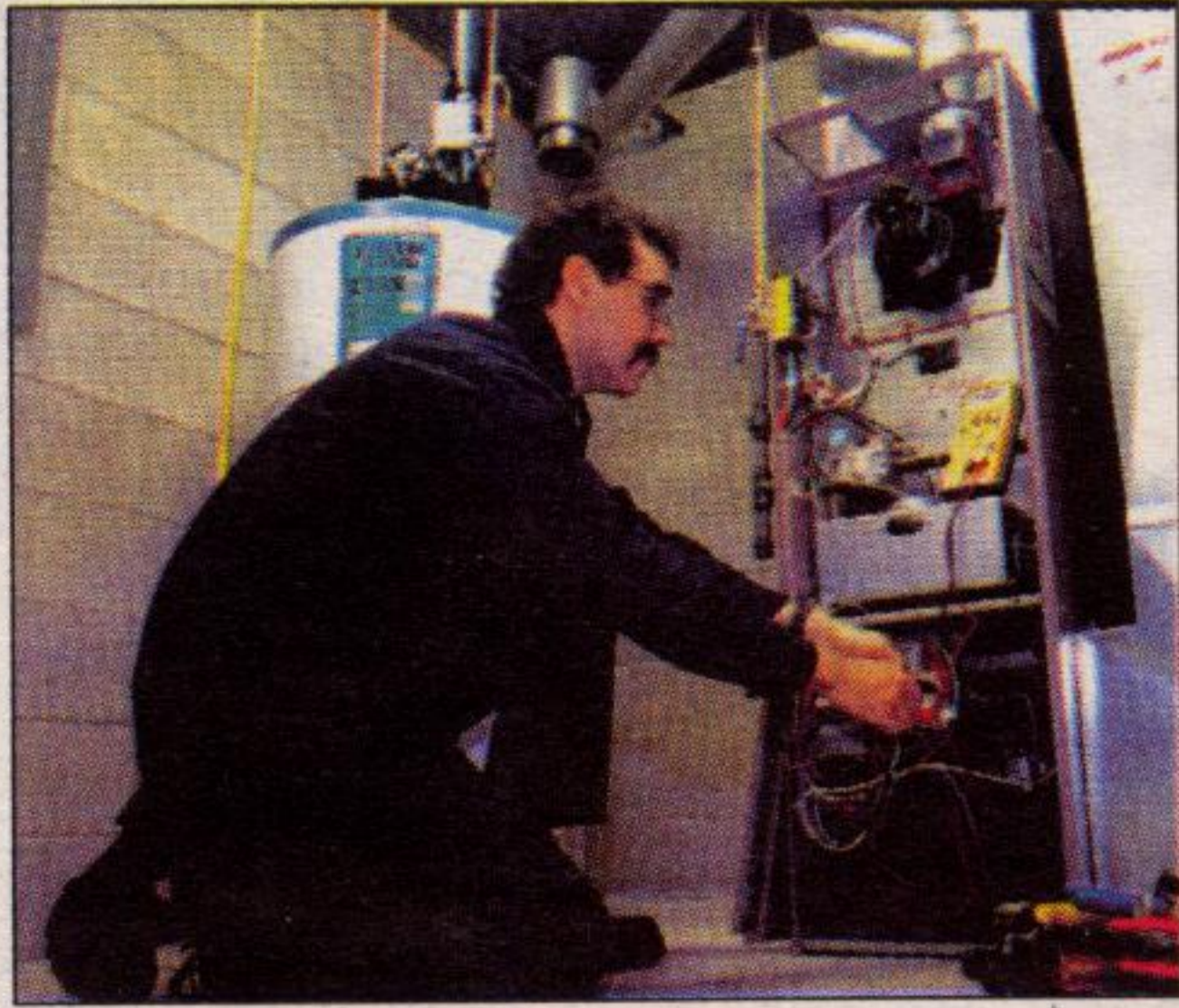
A cure for the coming cold

People rarely let their car go a year without a tune-up or oil change, but when it comes to the home, we tend not to think about house maintenance until something goes wrong. Now that summer is over, what can we do to ensure our homes keep us warm when the inevitable cold weather hits?

According to Natural Resources Canada's Office of Energy Efficiency, a badly maintained heating system wastes fuel and money. More importantly, a furnace that is not operating properly can endanger your health as a result of carbon monoxide and other gases escaping into your home. Unless you know exactly what you're doing, it's best to leave your furnace maintenance to the experts.

"Furnaces most often fail when they are first started in the fall, making our call centre pretty busy when the first cold snap hits," explains Dave Walton, Director of Home Ideas for Direct Energy Essential Home Services. "Lighting up your furnace at the end of summer or early fall to make sure it is in good working order should help you avoid disappointment when you need to heat your home in a hurry."

If your furnace isn't working properly at first, Walton advises not to panic. Instead, he counsels homeowners to check their fuse box for a faulty fuse or breaker, or check that their furnace power switch is turned to the "on" position, or check to see if the thermostat needs new batteries. If that doesn't get your furnace working, he suggests calling a licensed heating



contractor.

Direct Energy Essential Home Services recommends that a qualified technician make regular visits to your home to check for the following:

- Carbon monoxide (CO) levels
- Hazardous debris in the chimney and flue
- Clean air filters
- Operation of thermostat and safety controls
- Gas pilot safety system
- Motor, fan and blower operation
- Condition, tension and alignment of fan belt
- Clean burners
- Gas piping to furnace

Not only will a well-maintained system run more efficiently, the technician can pinpoint potential problems before they become costly and inconvenient repairs.

For a free consultation or more information, call Direct Energy Essential Home Services at 1-800-266-3939 or visit www.directenergy.com.

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