

TECH TIP # 5



One of a series of dealer contractor technical advisories prepared by HARDI wholesalers as a customer service.

25 COMMON HEATING COMPLAINTS --- and Possible Causes

What follows is a listing of some common heating complaints expressed in the terms most often used by the owner or occupants themselves. As might be anticipated, the vast majority of owner/occupants have little knowledge of their heating system and how it works. The skilled service person can translate a layperson's explanation of what the problem is into specific technical malfunctions or adjustments.

1. "My furnace isn't giving me any heat"

- Fuses could have been blown.
- Gas line may be turned off.
- Oil tank may be empty.
- Dirty filters.
- Blower or burner motor failed.
- Blower belt broken.
- Control or component defective.
- Low gas pressure.
- Pilot outage.
- Oil burner nozzle stopped up.
- Oil line frozen.
- Dirty thermostat contacts.

2. "Not enough heat through the whole house"

- Clogged filter(s).
- Inadequate sized unit.
- Insufficient input.
- Limit switch setting too low.

- Return air grilles obstructed.
- Distribution system improperly sized.
- Wrong thermostat or wrong heat anticipator setting in the thermostat.
- Thermostat affected by artificial heat such as a floor lamp.

3. "It's drafty -- my feet are cold"

- Improper distribution system design.
- Improper blower operation.
- Intermittent blower operation.
- Improper blower speed.
- Improper blower control setting.
- Furnace too large for house.
- Input too large for house.
- Lack of insulation or air infiltration around windows.

4. "The furnace is noisy"

- Blower noise because of bad bearing.
- Misalignment of blower pulley or motor pulley.
- Expansion and contraction of heat exchanger or duct system.
- Solenoid gas valves.
- Improper adjustment of burner.
- Short, direct duct runs.

5. "Fan is squeaking"

- See # 4.

6. “Too much variation in temperature”

- Too much thermostat differential.
- Improper heat anticipation in thermostat.
- Improper thermostat location.
- Incorrect blower speed setting and/or control setting.
- Unit input too large.

7. “Furnace runs all the time”

- Inquire if the house is at temperature of the thermostat setting.
- Determine if burner or blower is running.
- Summer switch may be left on.
- Continuous fan switch is on.

8. “Smell odors”

- Leaky heat exchanger.
- Overfiring.
- Outdoor or cooking odors.
- Foreign material left in duct.
- Overheated motor.
- New paint burning off.
- Over the summer dust in first fall use of furnace.

9. “Fuel bill too high”

- Clogged filters.
- Fuel cost increased since last year.
- Colder winter.
- Poor burner installation or adjustments.
- System not balanced.
- Improper insulation and/or weather stripping.

10. “Windows sweat”

- Clothes dryer not vented.
- Crawl space not covered with vapor barrier.

- Lack of storm windows or insulated glass.
- Wet plaster.
- Unusual amount of canning or cooking.
- Improper venting of appliances such as water heater.
- Drying clothes in kitchen.
- Improper venting of furnace.
- Too high of a humidistat setting.
- Exhaust fan not working.

11. “Too much dirt”

- Too much neighborhood dirt in the atmosphere.
- Register incorrectly installed.
- Improper burner adjustment.
- Lime in humidifier water.

12. “Furniture drying out”

- Lack of humidifier.
- Humidifier isn't working.
- Excessive infiltration.

13. “Getting shocked from rugs”

- Lack of humidity.
- See # 12.

14. “TV set or AM radio is being bothered”

- Blower not grounded.
- Electrical circuit not grounded.
- Humidifier motor not grounded.

15. “One room to hot, another one cold”

- Blower operating intermittently.
- Need longer blower cycles.
- System not balanced or improperly designed.
- Register closed.
- Damper turned off.

16. “Soot”

- Burner out of adjustment.

- Too much infiltration.
- Atmospheric dirt.
- Burning soft coal in neighborhood.
- Smog.

17. “Blower runs all night”

- Summer switch on.
- Fan control stuck.
- Outside temperature sufficiently low.
- Dirty filters.

18. “Cold air coming out of registers”

- Blower control set too low.
- Blower running too fast.
- Air at room temperature doing a heating job. (72° F air may seem cold)
- Register or vane adjustment.

19. “How do I light my pilot?”

- See instructions on panel of unit.
- See instructions in furnace literature.

20. “Pilot is on but my burner won’t come on”

- Push the red button.
- Check control circuit.
- Check fuse or circuit breaker.
- Check thermostat to make sure it is calling for heat.
- Power failure.

21. “Cold floors”

- Air infiltration through doors or windows.
- Lack of vapor barrier.
- Lack of insulation.
- Lack of return air to unit.
- Improper register location or selection.
- No continuous air circulation.
- Improper system selection.
- Open crawl space or basement.
- Uninsulated slab.
- Garage door open.

22. “Cold basement”

- Need heat outlet and cold air return.

23. “My oil furnace exploded”

- Delayed ignition.
- Electrodes dirty and not properly set.
- Electrode porcelain cracked.
- Chimney plugged.
- Lack of combustion air.
- Nozzle spray pattern lopsided.

24. “Furnace won’t shut off; house overheating”

- Thermostat stuck on.
- Gas valve or relay stuck.
- Short in electrical wiring.

25. “Basement too hot”

- Lack of return air.
- Leaks in duct system.
- Filters dirty.
- Blower too small.
- Leaks in plenum and duct system.