

Water Heater Maintenance

Water heaters, gas or electric, have become more complex and expensive. They also do not seem to last as long as they once did. This is one modern appliance that we could not live without, but is "out of sight, out of mind" until we have problems.

HOT WATER HEATER FLUSHING

Maintenance books recommend that the hot water heater be drained (flushed) every six months, but few homeowners bother to do this. Often, it is put in an area that is not as accessible as other appliances. It may or may not be easy to drain, even though all heaters have a hose connection and faucet control at the bottom. This task is not only inconvenient, but often the washer and/or washer seat on the faucet must be replaced after draining. Sometimes the entire faucet assembly will have to be replaced. If it is not done correctly, the unit may leak at the faucet. Furthermore the unit can be damaged while draining. Unless you are fully familiar with servicing these units, one should consult their service representatives at the gas or electric utility before undertaking this task.

ODORS

A heater which is recycled off/on or left off for a period of non-heating may develop offensive odors from sulfur bacteria. The odor, hydrogen sulfide - "rotten egg odor", may be drawn back through cold water faucets as well as the hot water faucet.

TEMPERATURE SETTINGS

The heater thermostat should be set at a reasonable temperature. Scalding of infants and the elderly can be a real hazard, even when the temperature setting is within proper limits. Again, the user should consult with their energy supplier to have the unit set at a safe temperature.

WHITE PLASTIC PARTICLES

It is not unusual for the white plastic (PVC) filler tube inside the heater to disintegrate and discharge small white particles to the faucet aerator screens. These particles can come through not only the hot water lines but the cold water lines as well. These particles may appear to be soft and crumbly, but a good test is to heat this material with a match. PVC will melt; minerals, such as calcium will not.