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REAL ESTATE IN SHAPE: Is your heating system ready for wintertime?

By [Carole Terrell](#)

CTERRELL@CITIZEN-TIMES.COM

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Question: How often should a furnace or stove pipe be cleaned?

Duane Gentry, Gentry Heating and Cooling: A furnace should be have maintenance performed annually by a qualified professional.

Q: What steps can be taken to reduce risk of fire, carbon monoxide or other problems?

A: Ensure the exhaust pipe is clear and free of debris. Ensure the burner on your furnace is operating properly. Ensure there are no gas leaks at your furnace. Install a carbon monoxide detector at the furnace location and in your bedroom.

Q: How long does it take to inspect and clean the furnace?

A: Proper inspection and maintenance requires 1.5 to 2 hours if done thoroughly.

Q: What is the proper way to check for fuel leaks?

A: The best way to check for leaks is with a gas leak detector. These are quite expensive instruments. A homeowner can use soap bubbles in a squirt bottle at each joint of gas piping to check manually.

Q: What leads to fire in a chimney?

A: Excessive build up of soot in the exhaust piping or build up of creosote in the chimney itself. Creosote is usually a product of wood burning fires, but a chimney for an oil furnace can also catch fire if not properly maintained due to excessive build up of oily soot materials.

Q: What steps can homeowners take between cleanings to maintain their heating system?

A: Change air filters monthly. Inspect your exhaust pipe monthly to insure that no holes have developed and that the pipe has not become blocked by debris or soot.

Basic tune up should consist of the following:

1. Clean combustion chamber to avoid corrosion of the chamber walls
2. Inspect flue/exhaust piping to ensure there are no carbon monoxide leaks. Clean as needed.
3. Replace oil filter (if applicable) which prevents impurities from clogging the nozzle.
4. Change air filter and inspect belts in the blower compartment. This prevents overheating of blower motors and improves the efficiency of the furnace — if clean.

5. Adjust and test burner efficiency. This is best done by using a Combustion Analyzer.

The Professional:

Name: Duane Gentry

Company: Gentry Heating Inc.

100 Buckeye Access Road, Swannanoa, NC 274-2520

Title: President

Experience: 20 years

On the Net: www.gentryheatinginc.com

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