



Puffback (Furnace Fire)



Regular Maintenance Can Reduce Your Risk



A puffback, or furnace fire, can happen from one or a combination of reasons. Typically, a boiler or furnace may fill up with soot to the point that it won't operate. Usually the heating unit simply won't operate. The safety controls shut down and repairs (including a cleaning of the unit) will be necessary. Sometimes, however, a delayed ignition may occur just before the safety controls shut the unit down, and a 'puff' of flame may blow a large amount of soot out of the unit. Because soot is light, it will quickly spread through the house and will make a real mess. Because soot is basically unburned or partially burned fuel, it will soil anything it touches



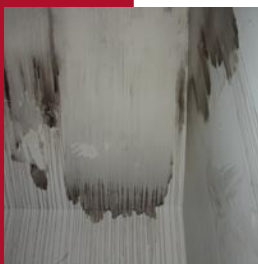
Due to the acidic makeup of smoke, this can be very damaging to all exposed areas as conventional cleaning will not clean the soot and could lead to permanent damage.

To help avoid puffbacks, follow these basic steps:

1. Change or clean your furnace filter. This should be done at a minimum of once a year, or more frequently if you notice heavy buildup.

2. Clear outdoor exhaust vents. During the winter, be sure to clear snow and ice away from the intake and exhaust vents outdoors. If the vents become blocked, dangerous carbon monoxide fumes can back up into the house, and the furnace could shut down.

3. Schedule an annual tune-up. The New York State Department of Energy recommends that both oil- and gas-fired equipment be serviced annually to remove any build-up of particulate matter in the passages of boilers and furnaces. The presence of particulate debris inside heating equipment degrades performance and causes an increase in the production of particulate, which in turn causes further deterioration of performance, and so on.



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