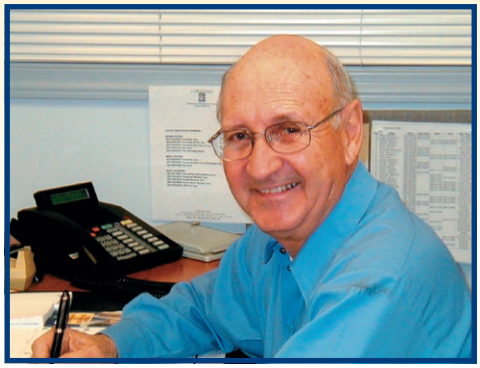
winter 2020

HOUSE CALLS

ENERGY SOURCE

from D.F. Richard Energy

In Memoriam: Raymond Richard



It is with great sadness that we share the news that **Raymond Richard** passed away on October 18, 2019, at the age of 91.

Ray was dedicated to the business his parents started back in 1932. Always first in the office, he would hit the ground running and wouldn't stop until it was time to go home.

There was no job too small or too big for Ray. He would tackle one and move on to the next. A kind man who always had a smile, he was a brother, a husband, a father, an uncle, a grandfather and a boss, but most of all, a friend.

He has left us with wonderful memories and stories that we will continue to share for generations. We miss him deeply. The Richard family and our dedicated employees will carry on.

Staying connected

Winter weather and frigid temperatures can be hazardous, and planning ahead is vital. Part of that for us is being able to reach you. Please let us know if your contact information changes — a new phone number, mobile number or email address — so we can reach you and ensure smooth service. You can call us directly, or go to **DFRichard.com** and use our customer portal.

Of course, we are here for you 24 hours a day. Please call us at any time with any safety or comfort concerns.

Generator safety

When winter storms knock out power, a whole-house generator can keep your home warm and provide peace of mind. These generators should only be installed by a licensed contractor in order to guarantee safe connections and prevent "backfeed." Backfeed is caused by energy leaving the generator and going back into the utility lines, which is extremely dangerous for linemen who are working to restore your power. If you rely on a portable generator, follow these important safety tips:

- **Only operate** portable generators outside. They produce carbon monoxide, a deadly odorless gas, so they require plenty of ventilation.
- **Never plug** a portable generator directly into a wall outlet: This will cause backfeed. Only use heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances to the generator's outlets.
- **Turn on** the generator before plugging in appliances. Then turn them on one at a time, to avoid overloading the unit.
- **Never touch** a generator with wet hands.
- **Make sure** the generator is off and cool before refueling.

FAL19-15862

Warm, safe and trouble-free

If you heat your home with an oil or propane gas system, these tips will help make sure you stay warm and safe all winter:

- ✔ Install a **carbon monoxide detector** near your heating equipment.
- ✔ To improve air flow and accessibility, don't store items around your heating system. **Combustible items** should **always** be stored elsewhere.
- ✔ Check and clean **air filters** regularly, especially if you have pets.
- ✔ If you have a **power venter,** keep it free of debris and snow to ensure proper ventilation.

Burning Questions About Heating Your Home

The journey to seek out better comfort can bring you much wisdom.
We hope you will find more peace after reading these answers from our home comfort wizard.

Is it ever possible to fix a heating problem on my own?

While many types of malfunctions can cause your system to operate poorly (or not operate at all), the problems outlined below are not only quite common, but relatively easy and inexpensive to fix.

Power switches turned off

If your heat stops working, these are among the first things you should check. First, it often happens that the power switches for the heating system have been turned off by mistake. Simply turn the electrical switches back to the "on" position and your problem may be solved.

Unchecked air filters or water level

If you have a furnace, change or clean the filters about once a month; a dirty filter compromises efficiency and can even result in a shutdown. If you have a steam boiler, check the water gauge periodically. Low water levels are a leading cause of boiler shutdowns. Steam boilers should also be "flushed" when the water in the sight glass looks rusty.

Tripped circuit breaker

Going to the circuit breaker box and flipping the proper switch may be all you need to get running again. However, a circuit breaker rarely ever trips for no reason. If this happens once and never happens again, consider it a fluke. But if this happens more often, arrange for service, as this could be a sign of a serious problem.

Faulty thermostat

Many instances of heating systems not working can be traced to the thermostat, which sends a signal to your boiler or furnace to generate heat. If the wiring is deteriorating, these signals may get erratic. A buildup of dust inside your thermostat is another common culprit. You may also need to change the batteries in your thermostat.

Would it be prudent to turn off the heat in some rooms?

Sure, you wants to save money on heating your home, but you don't want to cause problems while you're at it. One common mistake we see is when people drastically reduce or completely shut off the heat in different zones of their home.

While you might think you'll save a little on heating costs, shutting off radiators or closing vents creates the possibility that **pipes will freeze –** especially in rooms that tend to be colder anyway. That's a really costly problem.

If you have a furnace, closing some vents disrupts normal air flow, causing an imbalance that will just make your furnace **work harder and strain your ductwork.**

It's best to keep heat flowing to all the rooms in your home.

A better idea is to keep the temperature at a comfortable level throughout your home and program your system to energy-saving settings when the house is empty or everyone is asleep.

If you have a zoned system, you can vary the temperature in different rooms, eliminating the temptation of shutting the heat off completely in some parts of your home.

Would I be wise to turn my thermostat way up to get warm fast?

Your heating system doesn't work like a car – there is no gas pedal to step on to make it go faster. Your furnace or boiler will produce heat at the same rate regardless of whether your thermostat is set to 68 degrees or 85 degrees. (Setting the thermostat higher just makes your system work longer.)

Hot Tip #1: For better temperature control, trade in your old manual thermostat for a digital, programmable one. This allows you to automate your home temperature settings and can help you reduce your energy use and save as much as 10%.

Hot Tip #2: Never program your thermostat below 60 degrees, even if you'll be away from home for a period of time. When your thermostat setting is too low, you risk frozen pipes. Water pipes near outside walls or in unheated spaces are especially prone to freeze-ups. The risk increases if cracks in your foundation allow cold air to seep into your home.

Can you enlighten me about improving my heating efficiency?

A study of over 1,000 homes across the country showed that consumers are getting short-changed on energy efficiency because of a combination of poor equipment installation and lax maintenance.*

After adjustments were made to correct problems, however, efficiency improved, on average, by a phenomenal **36%!** This was accomplished through the following methods:

- **cleaning and adjusting** the system – on average, annual maintenance alone can save you about **10% on annual heating costs.**
- **correcting flaws** made during the initial installation, such as poorly matched ductwork.
- **sealing the ductwork** to prevent air leaks.
- **improving insulation** in the home in areas where air leaks caused significant energy losses.

As you can see, a few fixes could save you a lot of money on heat and keep you more comfortable.

*Source: National Comfort Institute

Leaving town

Whether you head south for the winter or travel frequently, you need to protect your home from breakdowns and deep freezes when you're away.

Installing a wireless thermostat may alert you to a sudden drop in the temperature of your home — which could indicate a problem with the heating system.

Recruit a friend or a neighbor who can check your home daily. A walk-through could detect if a zone is not working properly. Have them check fuel levels and schedule a delivery if needed.

Make sure your driveway will be plowed and the entrance cleared of snow and ice in case emergency access is required — and let us know who is taking care of your home. Please also give us their contact information so that we can reach them if we need to about service or a delivery.

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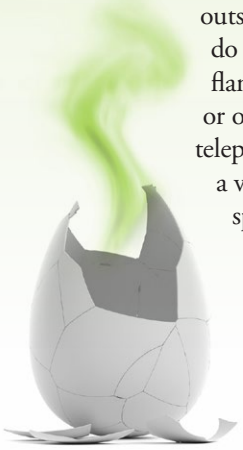
Why does propane smell like rotten eggs?

Propane is extremely safe. But leaking gas can be dangerous. That's why manufacturers add ethyl mercaptan, a harmless gas odorant that smells like rotten eggs or skunk. The smell is designed to alert you to a potential gas leak so that you can take action and stay safe.

If you smell gas, whether indoors or outside, leave the area immediately. Do not do anything that could cause a spark or a flame: Don't turn appliances or lights on or off (including flashlights), don't use a telephone or a cell phone, and don't start a vehicle. Doing any of this can produce sparks that might cause the leaking gas to ignite.

When you are safely away, call 911 and do not return to the area until it is deemed safe.



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Protect your home from carbon monoxide

Airtight homes are more energy efficient, but **carbon monoxide (CO)** can pose a greater threat in them. CO forms whenever you burn fuel — in stoves, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges and heating systems. This toxic gas is odorless and colorless and can potentially be deadly. That is why venting is so important.

Signs of CO poisoning include headache, weakness, chest pains, dizziness, confusion and vomiting. Sometimes symptoms are described as flu-like.

Here are ways to prevent CO poisoning:

- ❑ Install a battery-operated CO detector. Change the batteries each spring and fall, and replace the unit every five years.
- ❑ Get annual maintenance on your heating and gas systems, done by a professional.
- ❑ Make sure all your appliances are properly vented.
- ❑ Check or clean your chimney every year.
- ❑ Never patch a vent pipe, always replace it.
- ❑ Never use a gas range for heat, as it can cause CO to build up inside your home.