

Preserve Your Water Heater with Annual Inspections

Water heaters are an expensive investment that you use every day whether it's showering, doing dishes or washing clothes. Most households grind to a halt if the water heater breaks. The first signs that your water heater is not functioning properly is usually a lack of hot water or the water not maintaining its temperature. These types of things can be caught and prevented by scheduling annual water heater inspections.

When the professional arrives to conduct the water heater inspection they will be checking some of the following things:

- **The pressure relief valve.** When the inspector flips the valve flap, a burst of water should release. If it doesn't, it needs to be replaced.
- **Exterior of the water heater.** The inspector should do an allover inspection to make sure there is no rust or corrosion occurring.
- **Anode rods.** If the rods are corroded, it will cause the tank to rust. Anode rods last an average of five years and if you replace them every five years instead of waiting for them to fail, you can extend the life of your water heater.
- **Sediment draining.** This should be done at least once if not twice a year. The inspector should allow the water to run until it is clear into a nearby floor drain or through a hose to the outside if needed.
- **Checking the heating elements.** Once the front panels are off, the water heater inspection requires a heating element check. These can also become rusty and in that case, would need to be replaced. If you have no hot water, that means the top element is broken. If you can only get warm water, then your lower element most likely needs to be replaced.
- **Checking the manufacturer's plate.** The plate has pertinent information, such as the age and capacity of your water heater. Since most water heaters last anywhere from 8-15 years depending on make, model, capacity and even location within your home, it is important that at some point in the water heater inspection, the current age of your water heater is noted. This way, your inspector can let you know if it's getting close to time to replace the water heater.
- **Temperature.** The inspector should also check the temperature, to make sure the water heater is set to between 120-125 degrees. Not only will this save you on electric if you have an electric water heater, but it will reduce the chance of being scalded as well as reduce wear and tear that high temperatures can inflict on the unit.
- **Drain pan.** A good inspector will make sure there is a drain pan under your unit before he leaves. If water starts showing up in the pan, it's an indicator there's a problem with your water heater, and your floors will be saved in addition.

A tankless water heater requires a slightly different check, whereby the water heater inspection will include a filter check and keeping the unit scale and lime-free.

As with many large appliances in the home, inspections mean catching problems early, and performing regular inspections and maintenance can prolong the life of your water heater.