



MAYOR MENINO OFFERS HOME HEATING GUIDELINES

Welcome to Mayor Menino's Home Heating page

As the heating season begins and fuel prices are on the rise, I have instructed Inspectional Services Housing Division to provide you with *Helpful Heating Guidelines* that will help prepare you for the winter. While there is little that Boston residents can do to change the rising costs of fuel, you can practice energy conservation at home by following these helpful tips. The following guidelines will help you save energy and money.

If you are experiencing an emergency situation in your home and your landlord is unresponsive please contact ISD 24-hr "NO HEAT" RESPONSE TEAM: During frigid weather (temperatures below 45) Mayor Menino's Cold Weather Response Team will be on call 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. The Team is staffed with Housing, Building, Plumbing, Electrical and Weights & Measures inspectors. The Housing Division's normal hours of operation are Monday-Saturday 8:00a.m -5:45p.m. call 635-5322. After hours please call the Mayor's 24-hr. hotline at 635-4500.

I. HOMEOWNER TIPS

KEEP YOUR HEATING SYSTEM IN GOOD SHAPE

- Regular servicing of your heating system will ensure efficient performance and will help you identify problems early enough to make the necessary repairs.
- Oil heating systems should be serviced annually before or early on in the heating season
- Gas heating systems should be serviced every 2 to 3 years.
- *Planned repairs are cheaper than emergency repairs.*



MAKE YOUR HOME WEATHER TIGHT

- Weather tight windows and doors are requirements under the State Sanitary Code, and helps to conserve energy and money.
- A weather tight home also helps reduce the strain on your heating system and increases their life expectancy.
- Identify the areas where air can leak out of your home.
- Caulk or putty window parts, door parts, foundation and molding cracks.
- Use weather-stripping to insulate doors and attic access.

- Be sure fireplaces are fitted with a tight-sealing damper and keep closed when not in use. If a fireplace is used infrequently, use a chimney block to eliminate heat loss.
- Make sure kitchen and bathroom vent dampers closed properly.

ALTERNATIVE HEATERS

If required portable heaters should only be used temporarily and they should be kept away from furniture, clothing and curtains. Please follow the manufacturer's guidelines when using portable heaters.

FROZEN PIPES

- Frozen and broken pipes are a common problem during extreme cold weather and can be quite costly to repair.
- Properly insulate pipes that are exposed to extreme cold.

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

- Carbon Monoxide is a lethal, silent and odorless gas.
- The risk of "CO" poisoning increase during the winter due to faulty heating systems and/or unconventional home heating methods such as using the stove and oven.
- CO detectors are encouraged but not required in the City of Boston.

EMERGENCY PREPARATION

- Property Owners must provide their tenants with emergency contact information. If the owner does not reside in the dwelling then her/his name, address, and telephone number must be posted in the common areas.

Property Owners are advised to maintain a list of contractors (electricians, boiler technicians, plumbers, etc. that they can call for emergency repairs.

II. FUEL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

- **Heat Works**- this newly developed initiative is a collaboration of the City of Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development, Key Span Energy Delivery and Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD.) Heat Works will replace faulty heating systems in low-income seniors' households before winter sets in to reduce number of no-heat emergencies during severe winter months. If you are a senior and would like to learn more about the Heat Works program contact 617- 635-0338.
- Consider energy efficiency programs funded by gas and electric ratepayers and offered through public utilities. Go to www.masssave.com or call (866) 527-SAVE. Free energy audits and incentives for insulation, Energy Star lighting, appliances and heating systems are among the services that may be offered.

- **LIHEAP Fuel Assistance Program:** Beginning November 1st, homeowners and tenants can apply for fuel assistance based on income eligibility through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program ("LIHEAP"). Fuel assistance provides payments to energy providers to defer some of the costs of monthly heating bills. Call (800) 632-8175 or visit www.winterheating.com for more information.
- **Salvation Army Good Neighbor Fund:** To apply or learn about eligibility, call (800) 262-1320, (617) 542-5420 or visit www.magoodneighbor.org.
- **Oil Co-ops:** They are buying groups formed to help consumers purchase energy at lower costs. A list of oil co-ops in the state is available at www.mass.gov/doer as part of the fuel assistance tip sheet or you may contact DOER at (800) 351-0077.
- **NSTAR**
Energy saving tips.
http://www.nstaronline.com/customer_service/energy_efficiency/wintertips.asp
- **Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Energy Resources:** Helpful links relating heating oil and natural gas prices, fuel assistance programs and energy conservation
<http://www.mass.gov/doer/> or call them at 1-800-351-0077.
- **Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Telecommunications and Energy, Consumer Division:** Helpful information to "Help with your Home Heating Bill"
http://www.mass.gov/dte/consumer/fuel_assistance.htm

For more information you may visit us at www.cityofboston.gov/isd/housing or call our office at 617-635-5322.

III. FUEL ASSISTANCE DELIVERY

- **ENSURING ACCURATE DELIVERIES OF OIL:** While many of the oil dealers in Boston work to provide good, honest and efficient service to their customers and community at large, Mayor Menino does not want the oil market this winter to create a situation where some dealers may try and undercut prices by using deceptive practices with customers. Mayor Menino's effort is designed to deter anyone who may create an uneven playing field for good dealers while cheating consumers in Boston.
- The first steps to maintaining accurate oil deliveries this winter has already started with the Inspectional Services Department "sealing" the meters on oil trucks operating in Boston. The sealing ensures that the meter on each truck is accurately measuring the volume of oil delivered. This will allow inspectors to make sure everyone is treated fairly by creating a standard way of measuring oil deliveries.

- Every time you receive a delivery of home heating fuel you should get a receipt from the dealer's truck at the time of delivery that provides some key information including the price per gallon, the name of the dealer, your name and a meter stamp of the volume of oil delivered. Under state law, these elements must be listed; they are key to ensuring a fair and honest transaction between you and your dealer. Mayor Menino is expanding the city's efforts to ensure that dealers are adhering to the law this winter. He has ordered inspectors to conduct spot inspections of oil delivery trucks at night and on weekends in addition to their daily patrols. During these spot checks, inspectors will be looking to make sure that the sealed meters are intact and the above information is included on receipts. Inspectors will also make sure the tickets run in sequential order to prevent the substitution of a delivery ticket with pre-printed ticket that lists more fuel than actually delivered to a household.
- **Shop Around:** If you heat by oil you should avoid letting the tank go below ¼ full, and you should contact at least three oil dealers to obtain the best price. Some oil dealers will allow you to lock in at a low price provided you meet their requirements.
- **Gas/Electricity Discount Rates:** Income eligible applicants may take advantage of discounted rates and protection against service termination. Look into arranging winter payment plans with gas and electric utilities.
- **CONSUMER AFFAIRS:** The Mayor's Office of Consumer Affairs will assist consumers victimized by an oil dealer or landlord's use of an unfair or deceptive practice to pursue their rights under the Massachusetts Consumer Protection Statute, M.G.L. 93A. The office will also help prepare information for the Attorney General to pursue civil penalties against violators in addition to any recovery obtained by the individual consumer. If you feel you have been victimized by any unfair or deceptive practice of any type you can call the Mayor's Office of Consumer Affairs at 635-4165 or log onto www.cityofboston.gov/consumeraffairs/

ISD Housing Division: Winter Frequently Asked Question's

1) Does a tenant need to have access to the basement?

Yes!! Tenants need access if there are electrical over-current devices (circuit breakers), utility meters or oil tanks in the basement. Access does not always mean that a key must be provided.

2) What are the required minimum and maximum temperatures for Hot Water?

110-Fahrenheit minimum and 130 Fahrenheit maximum.

3) What are the required minimum and maximum temperatures for heating a habitable room?

68 degrees Fahrenheit in the daytime (7:00 AM until 11:00 PM)

64 degrees Fahrenheit at night (11:01 PM until 6:59 AM)

4) Are heating facilities required in every room?

NO!! As long as the minimum heating requirements are met in each habitable room.

5) Do tenants have to call their landlord before calling ISD?

No!! But ISD urges tenants to call their landlords to give them an opportunity to make repairs.

6) Does a landlord have to schedule an appointment with a tenant in order to make non-emergency repairs?

Yes. Landlords must give "reasonable notice" before entering to make non-emergency repairs. Reasonable notice is at least 24 hours. Written notice is strongly recommended.

7) Who is responsible for the removal of snow/ice on all common walkways within a 24-hour time period?

The Property Owner.