



**Media Release**  
**For Immediate Release**

## **Furnace failure or a blocked vent**

### *Heavy snow can mean problems for your furnace*

Every winter after a large snowfall, GreenSaver gets calls from people seeking advice about new furnaces. The question we ask if it involves a newer furnace - are your vents clear of snow?

Drifting snow or snow slides from roofs can bury a furnace air intake pipe. A buried vent means the furnace is starved for the air it needs for combustion. A common symptom is the furnace continuously trying to start up, but never actually turning on. So before making a panic phone call for furnace repair, go outside and check that the air intakes or the outlets for your furnace are clear of snow.

In most instances the solution is simple; clear the snow from the intake and erect a shelter that keeps the area clear of snow while not impeding air flow into the intake.

#### **Finding your intake or exhaust pipe and vent**

Go to your furnace and look for a black or white pipe (not the metal heating ducts) going from the furnace to an outside wall. Make a note of where it goes through the wall and then go outside to where you think they will be. In most homes they will stick out a couple inches out from the basement wall or the side of the home. Some pipes even extend up the side of the home; these will often have a curve near the end, unlike the dryer exhaust which is most often flush with the home.

#### **Keeping it clear**

Once you've found the vent pipe, remove the snow from the area. Make sure that no snow, ice or other foreign objects have plugged the pipe.

With the snow cleared from around the intake and air now available to the furnace, it will often start automatically. If not, furnace starting instructions are often on a sticker on the side of the furnace or on the inside of the access panel. Installers often leave the furnace manual in a plastic bag near the furnace, perhaps on a beam or joist.

If the furnace fails to start, and you don't have a regular service person, check the unit. The company that installed the furnace, or has done maintenance in the past, will likely have affixed a tag or label with their name and phone number. This is a good place to start when looking for more assistance.

#### **Breath easy-change the filter**

It is not only snow that can strangle a furnace, a very dirty filter can cause the same symptoms as a blocked vent and your furnace will not operate. In a more normal condition, a dirty furnace filter reduces air flow and makes your furnace fan work harder; clean filters can save up to 5% of total electricity use. Make a note of the filter size which appears on the edge of the filter, buy in bulk and replace them regularly. GreenSaver recommends cleaning or replacing your furnace air filter each month during the heating season.

The heating season is a good time to have home energy audits done, any work done to make you home more energy efficient will pay immediate benefits. GreenSaver can schedule an ecoENERGY home energy audit for you as early as next week. In addition to saving money on your heating and cooling bills GreenSaver will assist you with the application forms and advise you on your eligibility for Federal and Provincial grants to make your home more comfortable and energy efficient.

**For more information on GreenSaver, or to schedule an ecoENERGY assessment, visit [www.greensaver.org](http://www.greensaver.org) or call 416-203-3106.**

**To schedule interviews with a GreenSaver representative, please contact Tracey Chong at: 416.797.7210**

*GreenSaver is an independent non-profit corporation dedicated to environmental energy efficiency. They have pioneered Ontario residential energy conservation for 25 years with economically viable and environmentally friendly measures to help individuals and organizations with their energy need ([www.greensaver.org](http://www.greensaver.org)).*