# Exhaust Vent Pipe and Water Lines

## Inspector Weeks 613.290.3697

Question: I recently, by mistake, while moving some things around in my basement placed my hand on what I later figured out was the exhaust vent pipe for my oil furnace. It was really hot. I was surprised how hot it was. My question for you is: Is this pipe meant to be this hot?? T. Barclay - Chelsea

Answer: That is a valid question. The night you called me with your concern the outside temperature was well in the minus teens and had been there for a few days. Most of our heating systems are working full time and at full capacity. The exhaust pipe venting the products of combustion from your oil fired furnace is meant to be hot. The exhaust pipe in your home is designed to take that kind of heat. It is not meant to be touched with a bare hand. So to answer your question, yes, it is meant to be hot and it is designed accordingly. Common sense should always prevail. Would you touch your cars exhaust pipe after a long drive ?? I don't think so !!! This brings to mind another safety warning. Do not place items too close to your furnace. Too often while doing Inspections I see furnace rooms and furnaces packed with storage leaving the furnace totally inaccessible. Try to allow at least a 24 inch clearance all around your furnace and the exhaust vent pipe. Some venting systems are designed to require very little clearance from combustibles, but these are minimum guidelines only.

Question: I will be away off and on during the winter months and would like to know how best to operate my water line heater to prevent the pipe from my well head to the house from freezing. S. Joyce - Chelsea

Answer: The first thing that comes to mind is pretty straight forward. Moving water does not freeze. While in residence, doing your usual daily routines, you probably do not need to have your water line heater on. I am assuming it is appropriately buried and insulated from the well head to the house. Generally speaking, there are two types of water line heating cables, those that are wrapped around the outside of the water line and those that are inside the water line. Most of the newer in-line systems are relatively inexpensive to

operate and can be regulated with a timer system or left on continuously during the cold winter months. These systems, if properly installed, should not damage the plastic water pipe. The other type operated with heating cables wrapped around the outside of the plastic water line, an older system, can if left on continuously, overheat and possibly damage the water line. These systems are best connected to either a timer with short on and off cycles, on at night and off during the day, or operated with a thermostat that will automatically turn it on if the ground by the water pipe gets below a certain temperature. These systems tend to be more costly to operate so you only want to have them on when needed, to save electricity. Check the system you have and make sure that when on, the timer is properly set, or that the thermostat is working properly.

I welcome your questions please forward them to Peter Weeks Home Inspections at PWHI@sympatico.ca **now changed to pwhi.rhi@gmail.com or by phone at 613.290.3697.**

Peter Weeks has been a Chelsea resident for 17 years. As a general contractor since 1988, he has been doing residential home inspections for about three years. He is an associate member of OAHI (Ontario Association of Home Inspectors), CAHPI (Canadian Association of Home & Property Inspectors) and a member of the BBB and BNI. He is a Qualified and Fully Insured Inspector. You may Visit his Website at www.PWHOMEINSPECTIONS.COM.