

Our recent comment - below - on gas safety and energy saving may well have been tragically underlined just before Christmas in Wales as well as recently in Corfu and in Tyneside. As the cold winter weather leads people to turn their heating up this Christmas and place extra strain on their boilers – which may not have been serviced recently– more will be at risk. If you are seeking informed comment from a technical or a legislative point of view - what we are doing/should be doing to prevent such disasters in our own homes – or tips on how we can make our home safer, then we can provide advice and/or our managing director, (John Davidson) for interview.

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Gas safety checks save lives and money!

One of the most important energy saving measures you can take could save a lot more than money. Keeping your boiler serviced regularly, says John Davidson, managing director for national safety inspection company gas-elec, will not only keep your energy consumption down – it will also keep you and your family safe!

“Many people think that if a boiler is working it doesn’t need any attention,” says Davidson,. “But nothing could be further from the truth.

“If a boiler’s not serviced annually, it and the flue will gradually start to get blocked and become less efficient. The boiler will have to work harder and harder to produce the same heat. The result is higher gas consumption – and bills – and a greater chance of build-up of deadly carbon monoxide (CO).

“CO is poisonous and insidious. You can’t see it, taste it or smell it but a poorly maintained gas appliance or a damaged flue can leak CO in varying quantities causing anything from mild flu-like symptoms to severe headache, sickness, brain damage or even death.

“In the lettings industry an annual service is compulsory, so people in rented homes are potentially safer than homeowners and their families! Regular safety checks and servicing of gas appliances mean you will be able to sleep easy in

your bed, knowing your family is safe. And a gas fire or boiler operating at peak efficiency costs less to run, so you save money too. It's a win-win situation."

One gas-elec engineer came across a staggering example of the cost of such neglect! When he removed the front cover of the boiler the top sprang open. A long-term water leak had rusted the top of the boiler compartment. The gas supply had to be capped off because the leak had effectively destroyed the boiler, which had to be replaced.

"Regular servicing would have picked up this problem earlier," says Davidson, "and it would have cost a few pennies for a new washer instead of hundreds of pounds for a complete boiler! And, of course, that's without the extra money that the householder was paying for gas because the damaged boiler was using so much more fuel."

But the most distressing cases, says gas-elec, are in the homes they don't visit - the ones that hit the headlines when badly maintained gas boilers, fires and flues emit CO fumes and cause deaths. And it could all be prevented with regular maintenance.

"You have an annual service on your car," says Davidson. "It runs better, uses less fuel and, more importantly, you know it's safe. It's no different with your gas boiler. If it's not maintained properly, it is also potentially a very lethal machine."

Home owners can arrange for a gas safety check by calling 0800 587 999 or visiting www.gas-elec.co.uk for more information

Editor's Notes

gas-elec Safety Systems inspects over 100,000 domestic households throughout the UK every year.

gas-elec is an independent organisation, whose remit is safety, providing impartial inspections without any vested interest (e.g. selling boilers) although the company does carry out remedial works on request. Its unique inspection service enables it to provide property professionals and householders with multiple inspections of gas, electrics, plumbing and central heating in just one visit.