Fire officials: Keep HVAC unit cleaned

THE JOURNAL STAFF

SENECA — Don't let dust in your heating system be the cause of a home fire, fire officials warn.

Recently, firefighters responded to reported structure fires only to discover there was been a malfunction in the home's HVAC unit.

With cold weather approaching, firefighters are responding to more calls that involve home heating systems, Seneca Fire Marshal Shane Gibbs said. During the summer months, dust builds up on the heat strips. When the heat is turned on for the first time, the dust burns off and creates a fair amount of smoke, Gibbs said.

The Seneca Fire Department urges homeowners to schedule an appointment to have HVAC units inspected to prevent any unwanted smoke in the home.

Here are some HVAC safety tips provided from the Seneca Fire Department:

SCHEDULE YOUR PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE CHECK-UP

At the first sign of cold weather, most people use their heat for the first time since last winter. Smoke will set detectors off and may be mistaken for a fire in the unit. You need to schedule a visit from a HVAC tech to have the dust cleaned from the coils.

INSTALL A CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR

If you have a natural gas furnace in your home, it is important that you have this system checked every year for carbon monoxide (CO). Even if you do have a CO detector installed, you do not know that CO is leaking into your home until the CO levels are too high.

CHECK THE BATTERIES FOR SMOKE AND CO DETECTORS

Also make sure you test the device after you replace the batteries. This will ensure that if you do have smoke or CO in your home, you know it works.

REPLACE YOUR AIR FILTER

A clogged air filter can cause your heating system to not heat by denying air to the unit.



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Seneca firefighters, along with Friendship, Shilo and Station 21 departments, responded to a home Friday morning only to find a possible malfunction of the HVAC unit, which caused smoke in the house. No damage was done to the home, and crews reported no injuries.