

Annual Water Heater Maintenance Checklist

Turn power off or set control to "pilot" before performing maintenance.
Make sure water heater is completely full of water before returning to service.



1 Check Water Pressure

Check water pressure at the drain valve or hose bib. If water pressure is above code maximum (80 psi), install a Pressure Reducing Valve (PRV). Water pressures are higher at night and lower during the day. If daytime water pressure is 60 psi or higher, nighttime pressure will likely be above 80 psi—install a PRV.



2 Control Water Pressure

Most experts recommend setting the Pressure Reducing Valve to 50-60 psi to protect appliances. High water pressure can damage water heaters, toilet valves, ice makers, dish washers and washing machines. A dripping Temperature and Pressure relief valve often means the water pressure is too high.



3 Control Thermal Expansion

Plumbing codes have always required an expansion tank on closed plumbing systems. Operating a water heater on a closed plumbing system without an expansion tank will damage the water heater and other appliances. Pressurize expansion tank with air before installing on cold water line. Air pressure should match water pressure.



4 Inspect T&P Relief Valve

Inspect the Temperature and Pressure (T&P) relief valve per instructions on the valve's label. T&P relief valves will drip if the water pressure is too high or due to thermal expansion on a closed plumbing system (need expansion tank). Control water pressure and install a thermal expansion tank before replacing a dripping T&P relief valve.



5 Drain and Flush Tank

Drain and flush tank (very important for gas water heaters). Turn off cold water supply, and open drain valve. Open T&P relief valve to relieve pressure. Drain 2-3 gallons of water. If water is milky, drain entire tank. Close drain valve and open cold water supply valve. Open a hot water faucet and let hot water run 3 minutes to make sure all air out of tank before returning to service (very important for electric water heaters).



6 Check/Replace Anode Rod

The anode rod helps reduce corrosion and extends life of the water heater. Turn off power (or gas). Turn cold water supply off and relieve pressure in tank. Remove anode rod with 1 1/16" socket and impact wrench. Replace if significantly depleted (flexible replacement anode rods are available if overhead clearance is tight). Check the anode rod at least every three years depending on local water conditions. Units with a water softener should be checked annually.