



Washington Rural Counties Insurance Program

5 Steps to Reduce the Risk of Water Heater Failure

Risk Alert
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www.wrcip.us

Questions?

If you have any questions regarding this risk alert, please contact your local agent, or your Clear Risk Solutions Manager directly at 800.407.2027.

1) Check your water heater's age. *If your water heater reaches its life expectancy, the risk of a slow leak or sudden burst increases. Consequently, your efforts to inspect and maintain the water heater should increase.*

2) What is an anode rod? *A "sacrificial" anode rod is installed in water heaters to avoid corrosion of the tank. To determine if your anode rod needs to be replaced, it should be inspected once every two years and at least annually, once the warranty has expired.*

3) Clean out your water heater regularly. *Regular water heater maintenance should include removing sediment by flushing the tank every six months. Water heaters can be flushed by attaching a garden hose to the valve at the base of the water heater. Note: Turn off the power and run hot water until it cools before you try to flush the tank since the heated water may be 130 to 140 degrees or more.*

4) Get an inspection annually. *Don't forget to have a plumbing professional inspect your water heater's shut-off valve and all piping annually. Signs of broken valves, loose or wet joints, and rust are a signal that more severe damage is coming.*

5) Plumb the TPR valve to a drain or to the outside away from the building. *In a perfect world, all water heaters would be installed in a room with a concrete floor sloping to a nearby floor drain. The discharge from the TPR valve could be directed to the floor by a simple runoff tube, with no other piping necessary to get it to a safe place. But the fact is water heaters are installed in basements, closets located in the middle of buildings, over slabs, over crawl spaces, and in attics just above ceilings. Because water heaters are not always located conveniently near a plumbing receptacle, the installation of the discharge piping for the heater's TPR valve must carefully be considered. An improperly installed discharge pipe can sometimes be as dangerous as no pipe at all. The acceptable methods of carrying the discharge water from the heater are spelled out in plumbing codes and by manufacturers of water heaters and the safety valves themselves. Water heater failure is one of the top five sources of water damage. If you think your water heater is not in risk, keep in mind that 69 percent of all water heater failures result from a slow leak or sudden burst.*

Avoid costly water damage repairs due to water heater failure. By following the five steps listed above, you will dramatically reduce this risk.

Administered by:

