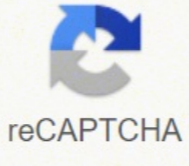




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How to troubleshoot a wall heater

At your home's electrical service panel, turn off the circuit breaker that controls your wall-mounted heater. With 120-volt heaters, this will be a single-pole circuit breaker. A 240-volt heater will be controlled by a double-pole breaker, which usually consists of two circuit breakers tied together with a wide toggle switch. Occasionally, you will find that the 240-volt breaker is a slim-line, narrow-body breaker. Flip the breaker lever to the OFF position. However, never assume you have turned off the correct breaker until you have tested the wires inside the heater. It is very common for circuit breakers to be mislabeled in the panel. Lee Wallender While the grille is in place on the heater, clean out the slots with the shop vacuum. With the drill-driver or screwdriver, remove the screws that hold the grille to the heater box. Set the grille and screws aside. Lee Wallender After first testing the voltage detector on a known live wire, test the inside of the wall heater to make sure that no power is present. Test at various points throughout the heater, focusing on the connections where the circuit wires and wire leads are joined. If the tester does not light up, then the circuit is off and it is safe to touch the wires. Lee Wallender The electrical circuit cable that enters the heater box (usually an NM or plastic-sheathed cable) attaches to a set of wire leads that are soldered onto the heater. The two sets of wires are usually joined together with wire connectors (wire nuts). Check the condition of these connections. If they are loose, re-attach them. If necessary, you may need to strip away some additional insulation from the circuit wires or wire leads in order to join them securely. Make sure there is no exposed wire visible beneath the wire connector. Some electricians like to wrap the base of the wire connector with electrical tape for a secure hold. Lee Wallender The outer insulation of all wires should be solid and free of nicks or cracks that might cause a short circuit. For minor nicks, wrap the wires with electrical tape. Badly degraded wires indicate a heater that has outlived its lifespan and needs to be replaced. Lee Wallender With a thin nozzle attached to the shop vacuum, clean out the heater's electrical coils to remove all dust. Dusty heating coils can cause overheating and premature failure of the heater. Lee Wallender Check inside of the heater to confirm that all debris has been removed from the coils. The coils must be spotless. Any debris left on the coils will smoke and possibly even catch fire. Lee Wallender Carefully vacuum out the heater's fan with the shop vacuum. Be careful not to dislodge or damage the delicate vanes of the blower fan. Spin the fan by hand; it should spin freely. Lee Wallender If there is no electricity present in your wall-mounted electric heater, the fan motor will not run and the unit will produce no heat. There are several common causes for this problem: The circuit breaker is off: If the circuit breaker has tripped or been turned off for some other reason, the heater will not function. Check the circuit breaker and reset it to the ON position, then check the heater for operation. The circuit is overloaded: If the circuit breaker trips at irregular intervals, it is possible that the heater is drawing more current than the circuit is intended to handle. This sometimes occurs if the heater circuit is also supplying power to additional outlets or fixtures. A wall heater generally should be powered by a dedicated circuit that powers no other devices in the house, but even here, a large heater powered by a circuit with insufficient amperage sometimes can cause an overload. If the heater circuit trips regularly, it's probably time to have an electrician look at the situation and make whatever circuit corrections are necessary. Or, the heater can be replaced by one with a lower power demand. The circuit breaker is defective: Although it is not common, circuit breakers sometimes do fail. AFCI and GFCI breakers, in particular, can be so sensitive that they frequently cause nuisance-tripping. A faulty circuit breaker should be replaced by an electrician. The wires are short-circuiting: Short circuits are caused when electrical current flows outside the established wire connections and finds a "short circuit" back to the ground. This is potentially quite a dangerous situation that can lead to shock or fire, so it should be addressed immediately. Short circuits are sometimes accompanied by sparking or the smell of burning plastic. And if a circuit breaker trips again immediately each time it is reset, it's likely you are dealing with a short circuit. Some short circuits are easy to spot and fix if they are caused by simple loose wire connections. But problems with the internal wiring of the heater or circuit wiring problems call for an electrician's expertise. When your wall-mounted electric heater's blower fan runs slowly or the amount of heat is inadequate—and you have already cleaned the unit and checked for physical blockage—the circuit voltage and the heater power requirements may be mismatched. This usually occurs if a 240-volt heater has been incorrectly wired to a 120-volt circuit, and it's almost always a sign that the work was done by an amateur with a lack of understanding. In this instance, you should have the heater replaced with a proper 120-volt model. However, there are also convertible wall heaters that can be properly wired for either 120-volt or 240-volt circuits. There is nothing wrong with wiring such heaters either way, provided the connections are made according to instructions. Properly wired, these heaters will run adequately in either configuration. Because repairing a wall-mounted electric heater involves your home's electrical system, call a licensed electrician if you feel uncomfortable with any aspect of electrical work, especially with changing circuit breakers. Wall-mounted gas heaters are great ways to keep your home warm and cozy while keeping the electric bill low and keeping maintenance to a minimum. However, maintenance is still key to having a top-notch, optimal-performing gas heater. If your heater is not working to its full potential, some issues may be easy to look for and simple to fix, others may need a professional to diagnose and replacement parts needed. If in doubt, always contact a trained professional before attempting a fix yourself. Gas Wall Heater Troubleshooting This article is a quick guide to helping wall-mounted gas heater owners troubleshoot common problems and quickly fix them themselves. We have created a list of the top problems people seem to have with their home gas wall heaters and found ways the experts suggest using them to solve them. How Does a Gas Wall Heater Work and How to Fix it? Gas wall heaters work very similar to radiators, where a pilot light is lit up from under the heating, coils that then push free-flowing heat up through the walls and all around the homes. In order for a wall heater to work, the gas supply must be continuously flowing into the pilot light, contently creating a source of heat. Although this is a great way to heat your home, it can be a little difficult to troubleshoot a problem when one arises. Why Does My Gas Wall Heater Keep Shutting Off? If your gas wall heater keeps shutting off, don't get frustrated. There are many simple solutions to try before it becomes a serious or expensive situation. Faulty Thermocouple A thermocouple is a tiny safety device that controls the flow of gas released to your pilot light on your gas heating system. This thermocouple is used to signal the gas valve that the pilot light is out and the gas tube needs to be sealed off. If the thermocouple is faulty or damaged, it may have stopped sending signals, and the pilot light is unable to stay lite, causing your wall heater to stop working. To fix a faulty thermocouple, you can first attempt to clean the old one, and you can do this by wiping away dirt and debris or sanding off corroded metal. If that doesn't work, unscrew one end of the thermocouple from the gas valve, remove the other end from the pilot light bracket, and replace a new thermocouple onto each end. The Pilot Light Flickers or is Weak If your pilot light is flickering or too weak, it may not be able to keep your gas heater running correctly. The cause of a weak, flickering pilot light can be due to too much or too little oxygen. Sometimes pilot lights can be affected by drafts or a breeze flowing through the basement or room the system is set up in. Other times, there may not be enough oxygen in the area, causing the flame to suffocate and keeping it from staying lite. In this situation, the only way to correct the problem is by controlling the air circulation in the area. Blockages in the Pilot Tube If there is a blockage in the pilot tube or the pilot tube is dirty, this will affect the performance of the pilot light causing it to turn off at random times. The pilot tube is a tiny thin tube that keeps fuel pushing through to the pilot flame, keeping the flame burning. If the tube is blocked, clearing it out is pretty simple. You can do this using a needle and pushing it into the line. The tube is super small, making a needle the only object thin enough to fit inside. Gas Wall Heater Won't Turn On If your trouble isn't with the pilot lite, the problem could have something to do with the Thermostat, gas valve, or even the transformer. Here are a few options to look into if your gas wall heater. A thermostat is a communication between the room temperature and the gas valve. If your thermostat is not working correctly and communicates to the valve that the room air is warm enough, the gas will not turn on. If you think there is something wrong with your thermostat, you may want to check the batteries; if they are okay, try re-setting it through the factory reset option. If neither of those work, you may need to replace the thermostat completely. If the gas valve isn't working correctly or locks up, then the wall heater could shut down, and the appliance won't turn on. The gas valve is the part of the wall heater that causes the pilot light to ignite. You should never attempt to repair a gas valve by yourself. The only one that should handle this type of situation are professionals with experience and the appropriate tools. Gas Wall Heater Won't Turn Off One of the worst and most concerning situations you could run into with a gas wall heater is when it won't shut off, and the heater is constantly running. If this is the case, there are a couple of things you should consider. Just like a bad thermostat will keep a gas wall heater from turning on, it can also keep them from shutting off. Although, this is a pretty uncommon problem these days, with all the safety features in place. This is one fix that doesn't require shutting off the gas and any power to the wall heater. If you are trying to keep a room warm, but the hot air keeps leaking through the walls or windows and doors, your issue is due to the insulation, not the wall heater. Gas Wall Heater Turns on But the House Doesn't Heat Up If the heater turns on but the doesn't heat up, it probably has something to do with the heating element wiring. If the wiring is bad or loose, it will not send the correct signals and will not heat up. Fixing the wiring should solve the problem. How Do You Reset a Gas Wall Heater? There are times where all you need to do is re-set your gas wall heater if it isn't working as it should. To reset a gas wall heater, you will need to go through a few different steps to keep yourself and the home safe. First, make sure the pilot is out, then turn the temperature all the way down on the thermostat. Next, turn the circuit breaker off that provides power to the wall heater and cut off the main gas supply going to the furnace, leaving the line to the pilot lite still active. Finally, you need to relight the pilot light, turn the circuit breaker back on, and open the main gas supply to the furnace. Once it is up and running, press the reset button and hold it in for a few moments, and then turn up the heat on the thermostat. How long do gas wall heaters last? Depending on the wall heater's make, model, and maintenance, these devices will usually last between eight and fifteen years. Many wall heaters can last well past that if properly taken care of. Conclusion Replacing your entire furnace and wall heater system can get very expensive and will be a long and rough process. Having the ability to troubleshoot and fix any issues on your own can be a life-saver. Remember, never do any type of work with gas lines and pilot lights unless you are taking safety measures and fully understand what you are doing. If you do happen to have to replace your gas wall heater and want to change to electric, read our guide on the best electric wall heaters.

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