

Drain That Water Heater

The No. 1 cause of water-heater failure is sediment buildup in the tank. Often it makes a sizzling crackling noise when the tank heats up because it works hard to heat the water. This wastes energy and often requires earlier replacement. However, you can save money and extend the life of your water heater by draining your tank and flushing away sediment. Do it at least once a year. For electric heaters, turn off the power. For gas, turn the control to pilot. Next, turn off the cold-water inlet valve; attach a garden hose to the outlet valve at the bottom. Remember you'll be running hot water, so be careful. Open a nearby faucet to improve flow. Once water drains out, reopen the cold-water valve to flush the tank. Then reverse the process to restore normal operation, turning off faucets last. Also check your thermostat. It should read about 130°F. A water heater that might have lasted only five years could now last 10 or more.