

Cleaning a furnace pilot light.

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Lani from Burnaby, B.C. writes: "We have a gas fireplace and the pilot light won't light. A gas company technician inspected the situation and told us the pilot light needs cleaning. Can we do this safely ourselves?" Why didn't he just clean it while he was inspecting it? But, yes you can clean it yourself. First you need to locate it, somewhere on the edge of or inside the field of the burner as you see in the first graphic. The pilot light consists of two little pieces sticking up, one is the nozzle for the gas to come out of, and the other is a thermocouple that the flame will bathe directly with its heat. If the thermocouple isn't hot, it will not allow gas into the burner. That is a safety device to prevent gas flow if there is no flame to light it. You override the safety by pushing the red button on the gas valve and this will send gas to the pilot light only, allowing you to light it. You have to keep that button pushed until the thermal couple gets hot enough to hold the gas valve open. If you let go and the flame goes out, it wasn't hot enough. Try again and hold it a bit longer. When you can get a flame, but it just won't hold, either the flame is not hot enough, or the thermocouple is not getting the heat - or it is broken. So before you replace the pilot light, try poking a sewing pin into the little hole as shown in the photo to make sure that the gas is free to come out. Then lightly clean the thermal couple with steel wool to make sure it is not simply covered in soot. If neither of these cleaning operations work, it is time to get a professional in to fix the system.

Keywords:

Tune-Up, Cleaning, Burner, Furnace, Pilot, Maintenance, Gas