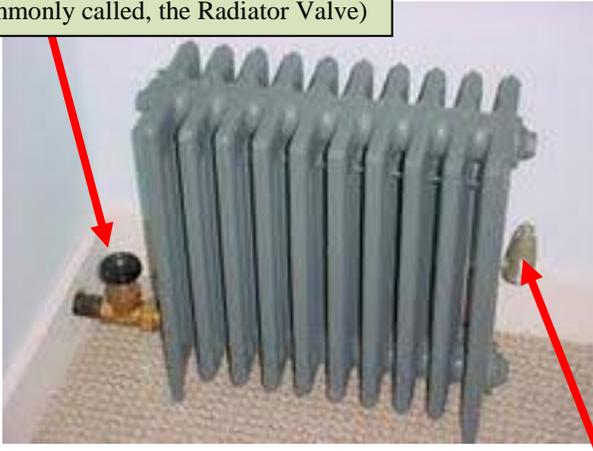


## Full Steam Ahead

### Is your radiator giving you the winter blues?

Every year, at about this time, we receive many calls about the steam radiators acting strangely. Residents hear loud banging in their heating pipes, feel too much or no heat at all. In many cases, we receive calls about water leaking from the supply valves or the air valves. Sometimes, a defective radiator can even release large amounts of steam into the surrounding air, leaving apartments filled with potentially destructive condensation. And almost always, somebody is inconvenienced, whether it is the resident herself, who needs the radiator repair, or her neighbor, who unexpectedly finds herself in need of a wall repair. The good news is, such problems are often avoidable. With some vigilance and by abiding by some rule-of-thumbs, we can usually prevent these issues from happening or at least catch them before they cause serious damage.

Supply Valve  
(or commonly called, the Radiator Valve)



Vent Valve (or more commonly, the Air)

- 1) Turn the radiator supply valve either all the way on (to the left) or all the way off (to the right). **Do not keep the valve turned halfway** or somewhere in between. The radiator valve, contrary to our wishes, does not regulate the heat other than turning it on or off. Actually, it merely allows or stops the steam from entering the radiator. While turning it off may help to resolve the problem when the room is too hot, doing so often can lead to an imbalanced system causing banging and clanging in the pipes.
- 2) **Check for water around the radiator.** While obvious, people often miss this. Check the radiator and air valves for water leaks. Even if the valves are new, this might mean simply that they need to be tightened. Please report this promptly!
- 3) **S-S-S-S-S-S-S!** While it's somewhat normal to have air escape with the sound of hissing through the air vent valves, this may be an indication that the radiator unit is imbalanced. Under normal conditions, the radiator should warm up without such force of air. So if you hear this hiss, please let us know.
- 4) **Pitch perfect?** For radiators to operate efficiently and quietly, they must be pitched at an angle towards the supply valve. If it is straight or slanted towards one side, the radiator may not be able to return the water collected inside the boiler, causing the clamor that keeps eyes wide open at night.
- 5) Finally, **read this book by its cover.** Contrary to what our parents lectured, you can almost certainly read this radiator valve by its appearance. If it's rusted, has a broken handle, or just looks like it has seen better days, your instinct to change this valve is keen!

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If you've found an issue described above, or need any help in doing so, give us a call and we'll be happy to give you a hand.

**Did you know** that staff member Victor De Los Santos was trained in aviation mechanics? Before coming aboard Spark Super Inc., Victor maintained and repaired commercial airplanes for major passenger airliners.



## Lessons from a Hurricane

Relatively speaking, the West 12th Street block fared better than many others areas against Hurricane Sandy. Sure, we had to do without electricity and the countless electric-dependent things we use, like the refrigerator, internet, and hot water. But we made it through. Some of us briefly settled uptown, where life seemed never to have skipped a beat. But many of us stayed entrenched in our downtown homes, perhaps counting the hundreds of things we took for granted before the storm or enjoying the sudden serenity that had fallen upon the neighborhood. For those of us who stayed, it could have been worse. Luckily, the weather was kind, the gas stoves provided ways to heat food, and unlike in some other buildings, we had water. As a building service company, we learned a great deal from this event and have organized our staff to become more prepared for the next time. For instance, we are considering gas-powered electrical generators for the building. We are also better prepared to ensure the presence of a full on-site staff during such emergencies, even if mass transit grinds to a halt.

But we would like to also have your input. How could we be better prepared for the next event of similar (or worse) scale? Email us at [info@sparksuper.com](mailto:info@sparksuper.com).

### From Floor to Seal-ing Tips on Winterizing your Apartments

During winter, ice collects in cracks and spaces between the bricks and masonry, leading to facade deterioration. Heat can escape through openings created in the building facade, leading to higher heating and electrical costs. And these cracks can be penetrated by the elements, leading to interior water damage. Moreover, windows can also expose the building to higher energy costs, particularly when the caulking around it becomes brittle and cracked (assuming that there even is caulking!). So if you've seen us working on the exterior walls, that's because we've been pointing the brick walls and caulking windows.

But while we work outdoors, here's how you can help to save energy right in your own home:

- Check the doors and windows for any drafts. These are vulnerable areas of heat loss in the room that can easily be addressed. Windows should be sealed and caulked from the inside. Doors should close flush with the frames. If they do not, either a rubber seal gasket or foam should do the trick.

- Any portable air conditioners should be removed from the window entirely. If the A/C remains in the window for the winter season, or it is a permanent fixture of the wall, the

A/C unit should be sealed with weather strip foam or caulk and covered with insulated plastic sheeting.

- Sealing cracks and crevices within the apartment helps to reduce heat loss in your apartment. It also helps to conserve the coolness generated by the A/C in the summertime.

- Look into installing a ceiling fan. It helps to circulate the warmth during the winter season, as well as the cool air during the hot season. Best of all, it takes relatively little energy to run these fans compared to other solutions.

### As we march towards the new

**year**, we are eager to know how we performed. Please help us improve our service in the coming year by responding to questions #1 through 4 below (grade from 1 to 5, with 5 being "Best"). You can email us your responses at [info@sparksuper.com](mailto:info@sparksuper.com). Or for anonymity, you may drop your responses in the suggestion box located in the laundry room.

1) Did we act professionally? Were we courteous and prompt?

2) Did we satisfactorily resolve the issues we were called to address?

3) Has the building been kept clean and orderly?

4) Were events in the building coordinated smoothly?

If you answered other than 5 for any question, please include a brief explanation of how we could do better.

Additionally, please feel free to provide any general suggestions and comments about our services. Or, if there any other building or related services you need or would like us to perform (such as package reception started earlier this year), please let us know.

For your entertainment, we will post the best responses in our next newsletter.

