



## Heating and Cooling Systems – When is it Time to Replace?

Information from the <http://www.energystar.gov> web-site

Certain telltale signs indicate it's time to consider replacing heating and cooling equipment, or improving the performance of your overall system. It may be time to call a professional contractor to help you make a change if:

- **Your heat pump or air conditioner is more than 10 years old.** Consider replacing with ENERGY STAR qualified equipment that uses 20 percent less energy than new standard models.
- **Your furnace or boiler is more than 15 years old.** Consider replacing with an ENERGY STAR qualified furnace, which is 15% more efficient than a conventional furnace. If you have a boiler, consider replacing with an ENERGY STAR qualified boiler that is 10% more efficient than a new, standard model.
- **Your equipment needs frequent repairs and your energy bills are going up.** Your cooling or heating equipment may have become less efficient.
- **Some rooms in your home are too hot or too cold.** Improper equipment operation, duct problems or inadequate insulation could be the cause.
- **No one is home for long periods of the day and you do not have a programmable thermostat.** Install an ENERGY STAR qualified programmable thermostat or have a good contractor install one and instruct you on its use--to start saving energy and money while they're away or sleeping.
- **Your home has humidity problems.** Poor equipment operation, inadequate equipment, and leaky ductwork can cause the air to be too dry in the winter or too humid in the summer.
- **Your home has excessive dust.** Leaky ducts can pull particles and air from attics, crawl spaces and basements and distribute them throughout your house. Sealing your ducts may be a solution.
- **Your heating or cooling system is noisy.** You could have an undersized duct system or a problem with the indoor coil of your cooling equipment.
- **Your score on the Home Energy Yardstick\* is below five.** That means your energy use at home is above average and you're probably paying more than you need to on energy bills.

(\*Link to Home Energy Yardstick here: [http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=home\\_energy\\_yardstick.showStep1](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=home_energy_yardstick.showStep1))

Visit <http://www.energystar.gov> for Information about Furnaces, Boilers, Heat Pumps, and Air Conditioners that have earned the ENERGY STAR.

For information on **Rebates and Incentives** that may be available in your area, visit the **Flex Your Power** web-site at <http://www.fypower.com/res/tools/rql.html> and enter your zip code.



## **10 Tips for Hiring a Heating and Cooling Contractor** *Information from the <http://www.energystar.gov> web-site*

- 1. Study up** - Find out about license and insurance requirements for contractors in your state. And before you call a contractor, know the model of your current system and its maintenance history. Also make note of any uncomfortable rooms. This will help potential contractors better understand your heating needs.
- 2. Ask for referrals** - Ask friends, neighbors, and co-workers for contractor referrals. You can also contact local trade organizations for names of members in your area.
- 3. Call references** - Ask contractors for customer references and call them. Ask about the contractor's installation or service performance, and if the job was completed on time and within budget.
- 4. Find special offers** - A heating and cooling system is one of the largest purchases you'll make as a homeowner. Keep your costs down by checking around for available rebates on energy-efficient ENERGY STAR qualified heating and cooling equipment. Begin your search at <http://www.energystar.gov>.
- 5. Look for ENERGY STAR** - ENERGY STAR qualified products meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and offer significant long-term energy savings. Contractors should be able to show you calculations of savings for ENERGY STAR heating and cooling equipment.
- 6. Expect a home evaluation** - The contractor should spend significant time inspecting your current system and home to assess your needs. A bigger system isn't always better; a contractor should size the heating and cooling system based on the size of your house, level of insulation, and windows. A good contractor will inspect your duct system (if applicable) for air leaks and insulation and measure airflow to make sure it meets manufacturer's specifications.
- 7. Get written, itemized estimates** - When comparing contractors' proposals (bids), be sure to compare cost, energy efficiency and warranties. A lowest price may not be the best deal if it's not the most efficient because your energy costs will be higher.
- 8. Get it in ink** - Sign a written proposal with a contractor before work gets started. It'll protect you by specifying project costs, model numbers, job schedule and warranty information.
- 9. Pass it on** - Tell friends and family about ENERGY STAR. Almost one-quarter of households knowingly purchased at least one qualified product last year, and 71% of those consumers say they would recommend ENERGY STAR to a friend. Spread the word, and we can all make a big difference.
- 10. Get the ENERGY STAR Guide** - For complete information on keeping your home comfortable year-round, get the ENERGY STAR **Guide to Energy Efficient Cooling and Heating\***  
(\* Available at: [http://www.energystar.gov/ia/products/heat\\_cool/GUIDE\\_2COLOR.pdf](http://www.energystar.gov/ia/products/heat_cool/GUIDE_2COLOR.pdf))