

Home Comfort

(What Consumers Need to Know About Heating and Air Conditioning)

What do you need to know to avoid the scams and get the value you expect from a true home comfort specialist? Read this guide and you will be armed with valuable information about:

- The 4 things that tell you your equipment may be failing.
- The 15 things to look for in a Heating and Air Conditioning Service Company.
- The One place to **AVOID** looking for someone to repair your equipment.
- The 4 red flags that should send you running (as you yell, "Scam!")
- Why regular maintenance is critical to avoiding costly repairs.
- The significant health issues that make home air quality such an important topic.
- What you should look for in a guarantee.
- How to save money by using less energy.

Remember: An educated consumer is a joy to the true professional and a nightmare to those in the business who are less than professional.

(Company Info placed here)

In a truly comfortable home you hardly notice the air conditioning or the heat. You only know that you are comfortable. A comfortable, healthy home that uses energy efficiently is the goal.

These are four ways to know your equipment might be failing:

- Your central air conditioner or heat pump is 10 years or older (this may vary some depending on climate, but in general if your unit is 10 years old or older and you notice any of the following changes in performance, the unit may need to be replaced).
- Your electricity use increases while your comfort decreases
- Your cooling system is noisy
- Your system runs longer to maintain the same thermostat setting.

*** If you have an older unit, a qualified home comfort specialist will be able to give you a clear picture of the savings and the improvement in your home air quality. You will be able to make a good decision about repairing or replacing. [Keep in mind, too, that if someone has told you that you need to replace your equipment and you are feeling uncertain, you can always look for a service company that will do a “second opinion” call.](#)

So, you might have some air conditioning or heating equipment issues. Or, you are having some health issues that might be improved with better air quality. How do you select a heating and air conditioning service company?

1. Check with friends and family. A personal recommendation from someone you trust is always a good place to start.
2. Go to the web. Look for local companies. A company's website can tell you a lot about the company.
3. How long has the company been in business? Do they have a physical address? A reputable company should have a business location that they would be proud to have you visit.
4. Do the company's trucks look clean? Do they clearly identify the business name, phone, etc?
5. Are the employees in clean uniforms? Do they look well groomed and professional? Remember, you are inviting these individuals into your home. It is extremely important that you have some sense of who they are before you open the door.
6. Are the technicians certified by NATE (North American Technician Excellence)? Does the company provide ongoing training?
7. What brands of equipment does the company recommend?
8. What types of guarantees and warranties does the company provide?
9. Is the contractor licensed and insured?
10. Does the company offer financing options?
11. Does the company have up-to-date testing equipment?
12. Does the company offer additional home air quality services?

13. Are there testimonials or letters from current customers?
14. Do they belong to professional organizations?
15. Are they active in your community?

Now that you have done some work to narrow down your list of choices, call the Better Business Bureau. A list of complaints could be an indicator of real problems. A good contractor will resolve most problems BEFORE they ever get referred to the Better Business Bureau.

The One Place You Should AVOID as a Primary Selection Tool?

The Yellow Pages...sadly, many of those flashy full page Yellow Pages ads are placed by companies that want you to make a quick decision at a time when you are experiencing a problem that has urgency. The ad could be for a reputable company, but it may not be. Many reliable companies place a more modest ad in the Yellow Pages and pass the savings on to their customers. After all, the money spent on that big, expensive ad has to come from somewhere, hmmm.

This is one of the reasons that it is a good idea to have a relationship with a reputable firm that you researched, interviewed, and selected at a time when you were not experiencing a major problem. Regular service from a qualified professional will minimize emergency calls and if you do have a problem, you will be dealing with someone you trust.

Four Red Flags Waving

1. **Avoid** any contractor who offers you an estimate over the phone. A professional always examines the entire system before making any recommendations or giving any estimates. You need someone who wants to offer you solutions that truly meet your needs and your desire for a comfortable, healthy home.
2. **Avoid** companies who use price as the primary means of attracting customers. Yes, we are all trying to make a dollar stretch a little further...but low cost may not be a good value. A company that is reputable will sell service more than price. Your home is probably your biggest investment. Protect it with a service company that does not cut corners, or provide poor workmanship in order to reduce the price. How are they able to offer that price? No insurance? No investment in training? Poor quality equipment? Always look for real value when you are choosing a provider that will be handling issues that involve the health, safety, and comfort of your family.

3. **Avoid** companies that do not promote high efficiency equipment. This can be a sign that the company does not have strong, professional relationships with the equipment companies or they are not up-to-date with current “best choice” products.
4. **Avoid** anything that sounds too good to be true. After all, you do not want to turn on the TV and see your air conditioning and heating company featured in one of the scam episodes on 60 Minutes or Dateline. Just walk away from offers that don’t make sense.

What Should You Expect When the Home Comfort Specialist Comes to Your Home?

1. You should expect professionalism. The service professional should arrive on time, should look professional, and they are courteous.
2. You expect a **complete** survey of your systems.
3. You should expect the estimator to ask questions about problems you are experiencing with your equipment as well as family health issues like asthma, emphysema, allergies, etc.
4. You should expect a clear presentation of solutions. Most contractors will offer you more than one system choice if you are in need of new equipment.
5. You should expect a written proposal that provides prices and a list of work to be accomplished.
6. You should expect to hear about warranties and guarantees that go above and beyond the manufacturer’s warranty.
7. You should expect to hear about maintenance plans, customer rewards, etc.
8. You should expect to be informed of all the ways you can communicate with the provider... email, newsletter, website, courtesy reminders, follow-up surveys, etc.
9. You should expect that the provider you choose will build a lasting relationship and become part of the team of people that help you manage your home environment.

Why Regular Maintenance?

A quality service provider knows that your heating and air conditioning equipment needs care on a regular basis. Some of the maintenance can be done by the homeowner:

- Keep the outside unit(s) clear of leaves, grass, and other debris. The unit needs air circulation to maintain peak performance.
- Change filters on the recommended schedule.

- Do NOT try to clean the interior part of the outside unit with the hose. Water and electrical components do not mix. The combination can result in damage to the unit or danger of electric shock.

Your home comfort specialist is equipped to:

- Make sure that refrigerant levels are balanced.
- Make sure that all electrical components and controls are working correctly.
- Oil the motors, if necessary.
- Check the thermostat's performance.
- Check your duct work for any leaks.

Equipment that is not maintained loses its efficiency and that costs you money. A system that is not clean contributes to a reduction in air quality. Problems that are not discovered early end up being big, costly problems. Research shows that 4/100 of an inch of dust on an evaporator coil can cut its efficiency by 20%.

Simply put, regular maintenance gives you the peace of mind that all is well. Along with peace of mind, a good provider will offer incentives and additional guarantees when they are the ones who regularly inspect your equipment.

Don't hesitate to ask your service company for a list of what is included in their checklist for the annual or semi-annual inspection.

Home Air Quality

When homebuilders began building more energy efficient homes with double-paned windows, tighter construction, and more insulation they found that the loss of ventilation created some new issues related to indoor air quality.

Your family spends most of their time indoors and the mold spores, pollen, dander, dust and dirt, smoke and bacteria are circulating in the air you breathe. That's why your home comfort specialist offers you a range of new products including:

- Air Cleaners
- Air Filters
- Humidifiers
- Ventilators
- Duct Cleaning
- State of the art thermostats
- UV lamps for the evaporator coil to eliminate mold before it starts
- Carbon Monoxide Testing

Asthma and allergies are a major concern to families. A comfortable home is also a healthy home. Talk to your home comfort specialist about whether any of these products would be a wise choice for your family.

What Should Look for in a Guarantee?

Quality companies offer guarantees that reflect their confidence in their services. There are many different approaches to this.

(Company should insert their strongest guarantee or warranty statement here)

Save Money by Saving Energy

Look for the Energy Star. Concern for the environment has prompted new guidelines for energy consumption, but rising fuel costs and rising utility bills are causing everyone to look for ways to conserve energy. Today's high efficiency air conditioning and heating equipment can save energy and money. Your qualified home comfort specialist should be able to give you a clear picture of the savings you would get by installing new equipment.

Regular maintenance is the most important thing a homeowner can do to keep the equipment running efficiently.

You can find additional reports and information at our website. We provide this information as a service because we believe that everyone needs good information to make good decisions. We, of course, hope you will choose _____ to be your home comfort specialists. We look forward to meeting you and becoming part of the team that keeps your home safe, healthy and comfortable.

We hope you found this information helpful. We would be happy to answer any of your questions or address any of your concerns. Just call:

Phone Number

Add Testimonials if desired.

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