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Comforting ideas

Home comfort news for the customers of E. Smith Heating & Air Conditioning

Spring/Summer 2010

Shopping for an air conditioning system? Here's how to get the most bang for your cooling buck

An air conditioner in its prime provides a haven of cool on the stickiest of hot summer days, and can even help keep your home healthy (see The clean, mean, cooling machine on the back page of this newsletter).

Unfortunately, air conditioners are not like cheeses or fine wines: they



do not age well. Older air conditioners rudely make themselves felt with indoor air that is warm yet clammy, icing that may be present on connecting pipes or hoses, more frequent breakdowns, and worst of all, electricity bills that would make anyone's hair turn gray.

If this sounds like your aging air conditioner, then you may be wise to shop for a replacement.

Today's models are much more efficient than they were even a few years ago, and tax credits make it more affordable than ever to

upgrade to a more energy-efficient cooling system.

But simply replacing an older air conditioner with a new one does not guarantee either comfort or energy savings. Here's what you need to know to get the most out of your investment in a new air conditioning system.

First, when you shop for a new cooling system, shop for efficiency. Look for the SEER (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio), the measure of an air conditioner's efficiency. The higher the SEER number, the more energy efficient the air conditioner is.

Next, make sure your new air conditioner is properly maintained. Research shows that, without annual maintenance, air conditioners lose a substantial amount of efficiency, break down more often, and wear out a lot faster than they should. To get the most out of your investment

in a new cooling system, treat it to an annual clean-and-check. Better yet, sign up for our maintenance agreement, which guarantees you superior, hassle-free service.

Last but not least, get your duct work tightened up. Studies show that most duct work has many

leaks (and even gaping holes in some cases). Reducing leaks by as little as 30% can save as much as 15% off your annual air conditioning bill, and about 12% off your heating bill. Repairing leaks is not a do-it-yourself job. Professional contractors have the right tools and sealants to do the job, and once it's done, we can rebalance the airflow in the duct work.

Save even more with energy tax incentives!

Did you know that you may be eligible for up to \$1,500 in federal tax credits for certain energy efficiency improvements to your home? The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 extended and enhanced many consumer tax incentives originally introduced in 2005. Carrier has many high efficiency air conditioners and furnaces that qualify for the 30% tax credit. Combined with factory rebates up to \$1,200, this is a great time to consider replacing your old system. Let one of our sales professionals give you the details, or call us today for more information.

Five sure-fire ways to save energy and water this summer

When it gets hot outside, we use a lot more water and electricity to keep ourselves cool and comfortable and our yards and gardens looking fresh. This puts a huge burden on these utilities, especially as summer peaks. The cost also adds up pretty quickly. The answer? Five easy and effective ways to save energy, water, and money in the months ahead.

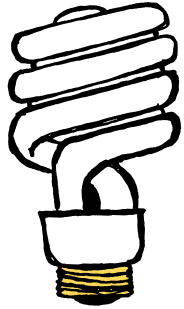
1 Have your air conditioning and plumbing systems serviced annually, so these important systems function cost effectively and any potential problems are caught early before they become big, expensive repairs.

2 To keep your home cool and dry, tighten up the envelope of your home by caulking exterior leaks and replacing weather stripping around doors and windows. Don't forget possible air leaks around electrical wires and pipes that penetrate exterior walls.

3 Have your duct work professionally inspected and sealed by a qualified HVAC technician

4 Place a rain barrel at far corners of your yard for handy watering.

5 Have your regular toilets, faucets, and showers replaced with low-flow fixtures.



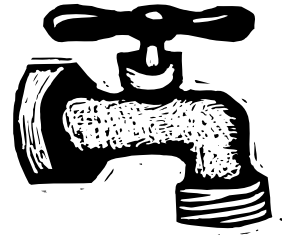
A Bright Idea

According to the Department of Energy, if just one room in every U.S. home used compact fluorescent lighting, the change would keep 1 trillion pounds of greenhouse gases out of our environment.

Did you know?

The primary source of greenhouse gases is electricity generation, not cars. Every step that you take to save electricity will help the environment as well as your wallet.

Are sneaky leaks draining your wallet?



If you live in a typical household, at least 14% of the water that comes into your home is lost through plumbing leaks. To put this in perspective, almost the same amount of water—about 17% is used for showers. Small leaks usually become big leaks, so it is worth it to find them and repair them. The signs of a plumbing leak include a toilet that runs when it's not in use, higher than normal water bills, sounds of running water in the plumbing pipes when water isn't being used, musty odors or mold growth, and stains on drywall or ceilings.

You can monitor your home for plumbing leaks by periodically turning off all appliances that use water and then reading your water meter. Wait at least 15 minutes and read the meter again. If the reading has changed, you probably have a leak. The most likely culprit is a leaky toilet tank. To check for a tank leak, mix a few drops of dark food coloring into the tank water and wait half an

hour without flushing. If there is colored water in the bowl, you've got a leak.

If you can't find the leak, call a professional plumber. They can locate underground or otherwise hidden leaks using special audio-visual equipment, and when they do find a leak, they have the right tools and equipment to make a lasting repair.



How to manage water damage

Water damage to your home can happen for all kinds of unexpected reasons: a burst water heater, a major plumbing leak, or a storm. Water is most damaging to the materials found in treasured household items such as photographs, linens, furniture, and books. To save these items you will need to act fast.

Before you enter the area of the flood, ensure there are no hazards, such as sewage or wet electrical appliances. Remove



any items that are about to become wet before you tackle soaked items.

Quickly create a dry, cool environment with good air circulation, because mold and mildew will start to grow within 48 hours. Use fans for air circulation and dehumidifiers to reduce the relative humidity level below 40%.

Household floods are often caused by plumbing problems, such as a failing hot water heater, a burst washing machine hose, a clogged toilet, or over-sudsing in the dishwasher or clothes washer (usually because too much soap was added). If any of these things happen, the first thing to do is turn off the water to the fixture using the fixture's shut-off valve. If you don't know where the fixture's shut-off valve is, then turn off the main water shut-off valve for the house and call a professional plumber for help.

Rescue the items that are most important to you, starting with those that are driest and least damaged.

If photographs have become stuck together or have been dirtied, rinse them in clean, cold water and then dry them on paper towels. Do not blot or wipe them.

Electronic equipment that has been soaked may be unsafe to turn on. You may need to have a professional check it first, depending on the kind of equipment it is.

For damaged books, put paper towels between the pages, especially if they are glossy. If you cannot get to small items within 48 hours, freeze them until you have time to dry them properly.

The rules of COOL



How to stay safe and comfortable when the hot weather hits

- Use major heat-producing appliances (e.g., dishwashers, clothes washers, dryers, and stoves) during the cooler parts of the day or at night.
- Ditto for activities that produce humidity, including hot showers, baths, and cooking. Use local exhaust fans to vent hot, humid air in the kitchen or bathroom for a few minutes.
- Don't place heat sources—such as lamps or TV sets—near the thermostat. The thermostat will sense the heat and call for more cooling than is needed.
- Drink fluids throughout the day (water is best), but avoid caffeine-based drinks or alcohol.
- Eat several small meals throughout the day and avoid large amounts of protein.
- Keep curtains or blinds drawn during the hottest part of the day and turn off incandescent lights when not in use.

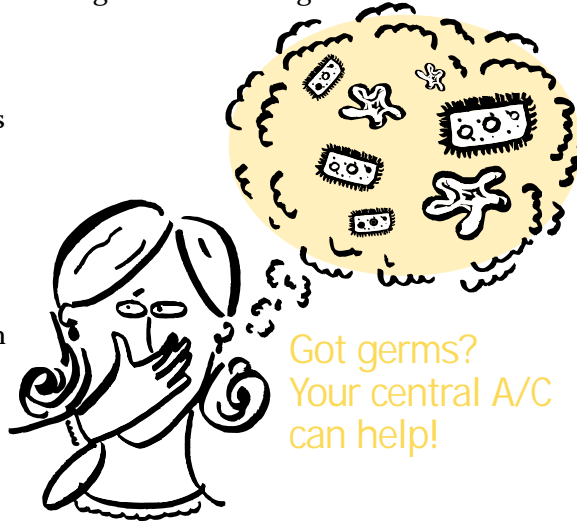
A well-maintained air conditioner helps keep indoor air cool and healthy

You love your central air conditioner because it keeps you comfortable during the sultry days of summer, but did you know that it also helps clean the air you breathe?

When the relative humidity of the air inside your home exceeds 50% or so, biological contaminants such as molds, bacteria, viruses, and dust mites begin to thrive. These nasty critters can cause damage to various parts of your house, from odor and stains to wood rot. What's worse is that they can cause or aggravate allergies, asthma, and other serious respiratory problems.

Fortunately, your central air conditioning system is actually your best line of defense against humidity in the warmer months, because it works by removing

moisture as it cools the air. With the relative humidity kept in check, the environment inside your home is much less hospitable to humidity-loving germs and allergens.



Got germs?
Your central A/C
can help!

No one wants to pay any more than needed to keep the house cool, but there are lots of easy ways you can help keep your air dry and your cooling bills under

control. For example, you can use local ventilation, such as kitchen or bathroom exhaust fans, to remove humidity as it is generated during cooking or showers. If you're worried about letting too much conditioned air escape the house, use the exhaust fans for just a few minutes to remove the moisture (an inexpensive timer from the hardware store can be added to the switch in the bathroom).

The most important thing to do is to look after your air conditioner by having it serviced once a year. Air conditioners are very sensitive to restricted air flow, so be sure to change the filter in your furnace or air handler regularly. If you have not had your air conditioner serviced yet, be sure to call us to schedule an appointment. You'll keep your cooling bills down and your home dry and comfortable.



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Turn to the Experts.