

"HVAC Issues"

By Tim Oglesby, Home Check America

Problems with heating and cooling systems can range anywhere from elevated operating costs due to an older, inefficient system to hazardous malfunctions. It is important to be familiar with your heating and cooling systems and to maintain them properly to avoid any dangerous conditions or costly repairs. This information is best obtained from the manufacturer of the system. One of the most important things you can do to maintain the efficiency of your heating and cooling systems as well as the air quality in your home is to ensure that your ducts and filters are cleaned or replaced regularly. Duct cleaning takes the expertise of a professional. If you need to find a duct cleaning service in your area, this link is a good resource:

<http://www.nadca.com/zm2/search1.asp>. It's a good idea to also clean your registers and vents regularly between your duct cleaning service's visits. This can be done easily by cleaning and removing the registers and then vacuuming out the ducts as far as your vacuum hose can reach. There are several easy and inexpensive things you can do yourself to maintain the efficiency of your heating system. If your heating system is a forced air furnace, you should clean or change the filter frequently (every month during the cold months). If you have a radiator, you will need to "bleed" it of trapped air that would prevent the water from running through the system efficiently. You can do this by opening the bleeding valve until water comes out and then closing it – be careful as the steam and water is very hot. Be sure to have something handy to catch the water. If you have a hot water heating system, you'll need to clean the boiler by opening the drain valve until the water runs clear. This should be done approximately once a month.



The paint was still wet when we inspected this old A/C

You should also clean or change the filter and check the condensate drain at least monthly. For window units, you should clean or replace the filter at least monthly, bi-weekly during the hottest months. You should also check the condensate drain to make sure that all moisture is draining properly. If your HVAC systems run on natural gas, make sure you know where your gas shut off valve is in case you need to close it. You should also make sure to keep an adjustable wrench handy for this purpose. If you ever smell gas, follow the below steps:

You should also do some regular maintenance on your cooling system. For central air conditioners, it's a good idea to hire a professional service to give your system a

check-up before the hot months begin. This usually involves a thorough cleaning of the air conditioning unit and a refill of the coolant if needed. Monthly, you should also check the unit for blockages and remove any vegetation growing around it that could interfere with its proper functioning.

- Evacuate your home.
- Once everyone is safely out of the home, shut off the gas supply at the shut off valve (this is located near your gas meter, usually on the outside of the home).
- Call the utility company or emergency service to report the leak.

If you would like an expert opinion on the condition of your HVAC systems, please contact us for quotes. **1-866-245-4663.**

About the Author

In 1984 Tim Oglesby unknowingly bought a home with significant defects. In 1994 he began Home Check America to assist new homeowners in NE Illinois. With degrees in business and management, trained as a home inspector with Carson & Dunlop Engineering, general contractor for ten years, a licensed home inspector and real estate broker; he is a sought after public speaker and author on issues important to property management and homeownership. www.homecheckamerica.com or call toll free **1-866-245-4663**