



# HVAC SYSTEM – MAINTENANCE SECRETS

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When outdoor temperatures get too hot or too cold many property owners resign themselves to higher energy bills. But good managers understand that a penny saved goes straight to the bottom-line, therefore is truly a penny earned. You know and I know that when we talk about energy costs we are talking about more than pennies. Hundreds, even thousands of dollars can be saved with a few simple fixes.

## **TOP TIP: Change Your Filter**

A dirty filter in your HVAC (heating/ventilating/and air-conditioning) system makes your furnace work harder, and leads to big scary numbers on your heating bill. Aim to swap your filter out once a month.

## **Yearly Tune-Ups**

Just as a tune-up for your car can improve your gas mileage, a yearly tune-up of your heating and cooling system can improve efficiency and comfort. Properly calibrated and lubricated equipment will save you money consistently on your energy bills and extend the life of your system.

## **Install a Programmable Thermostat**

This is one of the most cost effective upgrades you can make to your HVAC system. I know you intend to turn your heat down when you are sleeping or not home. But you forget, right? Why not have your thermostat do it for you? Programmable thermostats turn off the HVAC systems at predetermined times when they are not needed. This way, the home is only conditioned when it needs to be and the energy consumption of the home is reduced. Programmable thermostats can reduce the amount spent on heating and cooling by 5 percent to 12 percent.

## **Insulate**

You can save up to 20 percent on heating and cooling costs by properly insulating your home. There are different types of loose-fill insulation, which are blown or poured into place using special equipment. Cellulose, fiberglass, foam or even recycled denim can be used for insulating enclosed walls, new wall cavities, unfinished attic floors and other hard-to-reach areas.

## **Block that Leak!**

The small gaps surrounding windows, doors and other areas in the average home, taken together, are like a 9-square-foot hole in the wall. Plugging them can save you up to 10% on your heating bill. So:

- First, find the leaks: On a windy day, hold a lit incense stick to the most common drafty areas: chimney flashing, recessed lighting, sill plates, window and door frames, all ducts and flues and electrical outlets.
- Buy door sweeps to close spaces under exterior doors, and caulk or tacky rope caulk to block those drafty spots around window frames. Apply weather-stripping to movable joints. Recessed lighting caps and outlet gaskets can be installed where cold air often enters.

## **Properly Seal Ducts**

Nothing depresses me like improperly installed duct. I've seen homes lose up to 60% of their warmed air before it reaches the vents because of poorly connected ducts, or ducting that is not well insulated. So seal and insulate ducts to improve the efficiency of your heating and cooling system.

Focus first on sealing ducts that run through the attic, crawlspace, unheated basement, or garage. Use duct sealant (mastic) or metal-backed (foil) tape to seal the seams and connections of ducts. After sealing the ducts in those spaces, wrap them in insulation to keep them from getting hot in the summer or cold in the winter. Next, look to seal any other ducts that you can access in the heated or cooled part of the house.

## **Know When To Replace**

Furnaces need the most costly and frequent repairs in the last two years of their life. If you can circumvent those repairs and move seamlessly into a new energy efficient furnace, your new furnace can pay for itself. Maria Vargas is a spokeswoman for Energy Star, a federal-government-backed program that promotes energy efficiency and lends its name to energy-saving products. "If your furnace is over 20 years old, you're probably paying more to use it that it would cost to replace," says Maria Vargas, "Furnaces bearing the Energy Star label are about 15% more efficient than a standard conventional model"

## **Energy Star Rebates, Tax Credits and Utility Incentives**

There are great tax incentives, rebates and utility discounts available for the different types of Energy Star HVAC equipment. Your contractor should be able to explain what is available for the equipment you decide to purchase and help you with the paperwork.

*Since 1989, Dean Gilford and his company [KilowattAC](http://www.kilowattAC.com) [www.kilowattAC.com] have provided A+ Rated guaranteed heating, air conditioning and electrical services in the greater Los Angeles area.*