



Frequently Asked Questions About Your Home Comfort System

How long should my old furnace and air conditioner last?

Typically an air conditioner and furnace will last 12-15 years but we have seen systems still running when they are 30 years old. The only problem with the 30+ year old systems is that they are costing the owners a lot of money, because they are over-paying their utilities. It's all about what you decide to invest in – you get what you pay for! It's important that you are getting your annual maintenance done no matter what the age of your system is or what efficiency it is. Annual maintenance will prolong the life of any system.

These new high efficiency systems cost more money – why should we choose them?

The choice is ultimately up to you. You should invest in the system that best fits your needs. The investment you make today should last you 10+ years. Many systems today come with extended warranties packages and guarantees that have never been seen before. We guarantee our comfort advisors will give you the options that will best fit your needs.

How soon can we get a new system installed?

McCarthy's is willing to install your new system any day you would like. Normally our installs can be done in one day but sometimes it takes longer depending on everything you are having installed – extra ductwork, filtration system, etc.

How long does it take to install a new heating and air conditioning system?

The normal installation of your heating and air conditioning system is completed in one day. Depending on the circumstances, it may take longer than that though. McCarthy's installation trucks are equipped with the necessary materials to get the job done in the timeliest fashion possible.

How often do you change your filter?

It's easy to say change it when it's dirty, but that's not always something that's on the top of your mind. Unfortunately, with the many different filters today, there is no standard answer. The one inch or four inch pleated filter should usually be changed every 1-3 months. If you have an electric air cleaner, you will need to wash the cells every month

and replaced every five years. Along with the cells, the actual carbon filters should be changed every year. As you can see, the amount of time in between new filters is different depending on the type of filter you have. If you aren't sure, give us a call. We will be happy to answer your question.

How do I clean my electric air cleaner?

There are a couple steps you need to take when cleaning your electric air cleaner:

1. Turn off the power
2. Remove the panel
3. Pull out each cell (most systems have 2)
4. Pull out the pre-filters (most systems have 2)
5. Open up your dishwasher
6. Place 4 large jars – peanut butter jars work great – inside the dishwasher
7. Put the cells and filters in the dishwasher and add soap
8. Start your normal wash cycle
9. After the full cycle is completed, allow them to dry
10. Re-install the filters
11. Turn power on

With a Heat Pump – when should I switch over to emergency heat?

You should only switch to emergency heat if your furnace isn't working. Your heat pump is automatically set to switch over to your furnace with it is 20 degrees or lower outside. As soon as the temperature gets above 21 degrees, the heat pump will start heating again. It's just not efficient to have your heat pump do all the heating and all the cooling. It's designed to be your cooling source and your "back-up" heating source. When it's below 20 degrees outside, if your heat pump was doing the heating, you wouldn't see a decrease in your utility bills. McCarthy's sets your heat pump to the proper settings so you never have to worry about turning your furnace on. Your system will just know when it's time.

Please keep in mind though that there could be a 2-3 degree float from the actual outside temperature and the change over the thermostat. This is not something to get worried about. If you want to kick it up a couple of degrees, that should do the trick.

Why does my furnace have a funny smell when I turn it on for the first time?

You are burning off all the dust and other particles in the air that have developed there in the off season. This is not something you need to worry about as long as the smell doesn't persist. If you notice the smell for more than a couple days, give us a call because we would be happy to take a look at it and make sure everything is working properly.

How can I tell if my heat exchanger has cracks?

There are a couple things that you as a consumer are able to do as a first line of defense:

- Purchase a Carbon Monoxide Detector
- Have your system annual maintained

Therefore, if there is a problem with your heat exchanger, you will know about it. If your detector goes off give us a call, if our technician is out for the annual maintenance, that's

something they check, so if there is a problem it will be caught early. Carbon Monoxide is a dangerous thing because it's colorless and odorless. If you don't take these precautionary steps, you might not know if there are harmful substances in the air. Your Carbon Monoxide Detector should go off if the reading is over 9 PPM and that is a sure sign that there may be a crack in your heat exchanger.

How does my heat exchanger get cracks?

There are a couple different way that cause your heat exchanger to get cracks:

- Expansion and contraction of the metals
- Heating up and cooling down of the metals
- Dirty filters
- Improper air flow
- Improper duct sizing
- Gas pressures are set too high

Why does my unit ice up? What does that mean?

If your unit ices up, the first thing you need to do is shut off your unit. Secondly, there are a couple different reasons that your unit may ice up but all cause late air flow.

- Under charged with refrigerant
- Dirty filter
- Not properly sized ductwork

This type of problem is not one you should consider fixing yourself. It's best left up to the professionals. They are able to save you time and money because they will do it right the first time.

My system is running but the air that is coming out isn't that cold?

- Low on refrigerant or no refrigerant at all
- Compressor not running
- Breaker is tripped on the outside unit

My inside unit is running but my outside one isn't?

- Fuse on the breaker
- Outdoor disconnect
- Switch off at the thermostat
- Wiring problem

How should I set my thermostat? - Constant temperature or hotter and cooler depending on whether you are home or not?

You should set your thermostat in a way that makes you feel comfortable all the time. Sometimes you must take into account what you can afford. It may be most comfortable to keep your thermostat set at 65 degrees but keep in mind that is going to translate into higher heating and cooling bills. We suggest to save you money and keep you comfortable, that you to set your thermostat to one temperature all day. Changing the temperature up and down throughout the day will end up costing you more in you heating and cooling bills because it takes more energy to start up the heat pump or air conditioner each time.

How does an air conditioning system work to cool the air in my home?

There are two parts to our air conditioning system – outdoor unit and indoor coil. As the air moves across the indoor coil, the refrigerant removes the heat from the air as well as the moisture by condensing it on the cold surface of the coil. It basically cools the air and takes the humidity out of the air.

What is SEER?

The abbreviation SEER stands for Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio. It's the standard unit used to measure air conditioning efficiency. Keep in mind when looking for a new system that the higher the SEER rating is the more efficient of a system you are going to get.

Shouldn't I install the highest SEER air conditioner available?

Equipment with SEER ratings higher than 23 are available but not commonly installed in this part of the country. You can accomplish the same comfort for an affordable price by purchasing a 13 or 14 SEER air conditioner. If you aren't sure about which SEER rating you are looking for our comfort advisor will be able to come out to your home, complete an energy analysis and give you some options.

My gas and electric bills are high. Will a new furnace and air conditioner lower my bills?

OF COURSE! A new 13 SEER air conditioner or heat pump could save you as much as 50% on operating costs. In addition new gas furnaces are 30-40% more efficient than some of the older models. Just imagine the savings by upgrading your outdated furnace and air conditioner!

What's a Heat Pump? Is it better than an air conditioner?

A heat pump is a replacement for your current air conditioner. In the summer it does all the cooling and in the winter it *can* do the heating. The reason we said that the heat pump *can* do the heating is because in the heart of the winter when it's freezing cold outside, it will be more efficient for your furnace to do the heating. Let's say that your furnace went out, the heat pump would be your back-up source of heating and could effectively heat your home – it just won't be saving you any money. The heat pump saves you money in the spring and fall months mostly. Those days where it's cool but not cold, your heat pump will do the heating more efficiently than the gas furnace would.

We have testimonials of customers upgrading their old inefficient system to a new heat pump and furnace and saving \$100 per month on their heating and cooling bills. Just think what you could do with an extra \$100?

Should I replace my furnace and air conditioner at the same time or separately?

With the new 13 SEER standard, it's more important than ever to make sure your coil matches your system. Those SEER ratings are based upon a matching coil. If you can find a place that will replace the outdoor unit but not the coil, you aren't going to be getting the efficiency out of your system that you paid for.

By not matching the coil and system, you run the risk of voiding manufacturer's warranties and increase the probability of compressor problems and even compressor failure.

Is it okay to install a different brand of air conditioner and furnace?

Although it is recommended to match your furnace and air conditioner or heat pump, most brands of air conditioners will work with others as long as the coils and blowers are the proper size.

My home has a forced air furnace and no air conditioner. Can I add central air?

OF COURSE. Keep in mind that you may need to add additional ductwork and a blower. That is one of those things that is easy to do. Just have a comfort advisor out for a free estimate. They will be able to take a look at your home and give you a good estimate of the cost and what all you would need to do in terms of ductwork.

My friend can install a new system for me for half the price, should I do it?

We recommend that before deciding if that is something you want to do to make sure your friend has the proper licenses and correct permits to install your system. Also keep in mind, what will happen if your system has a problem in the future. Are they going to be able to get out and take a look at it?

All the systems we install have guarantees, warranties and club memberships for maintenance. If something did happen to your system, we would be able to get out there, assess the situation and get it fixed for you in a timely manner.

Should I try to get the BIGGEST air conditioner I can afford?

Not necessarily. An oversized unit may cool the home quicker but it will use more electricity and will not remove humidity adequately. A comfort advisor would be able to look at your home and give you your best options.

Some rooms in our home don't get enough heating/cooling. Can this be fixed?

There are a variety of causes for airflow problems:

- Dirty filters
- Coil and blower – making sure the right amount of air is passing through the unit
- Duct design issues

How do I check out companies I am considering having install a new system for me?

There are a couple websites you can go to and get outsider opinions to help you determine the right contractor for you.

1. Better Business Bureau – www.bbb.org
2. Angie's List – www.angieslist.com

Why should I consider a high efficiency filter?

The high efficiency filters will remove smaller particles from the air, which in return will help you...

- Breathe easier
- Reduce sinus problems

- Keep your system cleaner
- Reduce energy costs
- Increase reliability and longevity of the system

A cracked furnace is dangerous. How often should I have it checked?

Yearly inspections are the ONLY safe answer. Annual maintenance agreement programs are an easy way to get that taken care of. If you decide to invest in a McCarthy's Comfort Club, not only do they make sure you are getting the proper tune-ups done yearly but it's hassle free. We will call you when it's time for your tune-up. You don't have to remember, we remember for you! To get signed up for our Comfort Club Maintenance Program call our offices today or send us an email.

When should I REPAIR my air conditioner/furnace/heat pump? When should I REPLACE my air conditioner/furnace/heat pump?

REPAIR

- System has been annually maintained
- System is less than 10 years old
- The repair costs less than \$400
- The compressor and heat exchanger are in good operating condition

REPLACE

- System is over 10 years old
- The repair cost is over \$400
- Has had little or no maintenance
- Shows signs of deteriorating heat exchanger or compressor
- Utility costs are high
- You would like to reduce pollution and conserve natural resources
- Your unit doesn't meet today's specifications
- You will live in your home more than 2 years

How will the new environment friendly refrigerant affect me?

The 1990 Clean Air Act will eventually phase out the use of R22. Usually when something like this happens, the cost of refrigerant has dramatically increased, which is exactly what has happened this time.

By 2004, _ will have been phased out

By 2012, _ will have been phased out

That means that R22 products will eventually need to be replaced with new chlorine free refrigerant (410A).

Should I be concerned about Carbon Monoxide in my home?

YES. Each year carbon monoxide kills more than 300 Americans! We recommend installing a Carbon Monoxide Detector. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission states that is the only way to alert you to the presence of this odorless, colorless gas.

Why should I have my ducts cleaned?

- Duct cleaning improves the health of your home.
- Duct cleaning removes a substantial amount of dust and debris from the home – sometimes as much as 10 pounds.

- This dust and debris can clog up filters very quickly. Once this occurs, the system is less efficient and must run longer to do the same job.

How can I be sure I have enough filtration?

Filtration has two purposes:

1. Protecting the air conditioning system from building up deposits in the system and decreasing the performance
2. Comfort

If you are looking for your filtration system to do more than it is currently doing, you may want to consider upgrading. The standard 1 inch and 4 inch filters will do the trick but if you are not completely comfortable with that, we would be happy to talk to you about upgrading.

Should I cover my outdoor unit during the winter to keep it free from leaves?

That is not necessary. The outdoor unit is made to withstand the harshest winter. Some people would prefer to have a cover on it. This is possible but sometimes the cover can trap moisture inside causing corrosion of the electrical components.

Is it normal for steam to come out of my heat pump during the winter?

YES. This is the defrost cycle. In order for the heat pump to remove the ice that has built up on it during the winter, it must go into its defrost cycle. Once the ice has melted, it will return to its normal operation.