

CENTRAL HEATING

HEAT & COOL EFFICIENTLY

As much as half of the energy used in your home goes to heating and cooling. So making smart decisions about your home's heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) system can have a big effect on your utility bills — and your comfort. Take these steps to increase the efficiency of your heating and cooling system. For more information, see our [Guide to Energy Efficient Heating & Cooling \(708KB\)](#).

CHANGE YOUR AIR FILTER REGULARLY

Check your filter every month, especially during heavy use months (winter and summer). If the filter looks dirty after a month, change it. At a minimum, change the filter every 3 months. A dirty filter will slow down air flow and make the system work harder to keep you warm or cool — wasting energy. A clean filter will also prevent dust and dirt from building up in the system — leading to expensive maintenance and/or early system failure.

TUNE UP YOUR HVAC EQUIPMENT YEARLY

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. Learn more:

- [Maintain your Equipment: A Checklist](#)
- [Finding the right contractor: 10 tips](#)

INSTALL A PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTAT

A programmable thermostat is ideal for people who are away from home during set periods of time throughout the week. Through proper use of pre-programmed settings, a programmable thermostat can save you about \$180 every year in energy costs.

SEAL YOUR HEATING AND COOLING DUCTS

Ducts that move air to-and-from a forced air furnace, central air conditioner, or heat pump are often big energy wasters. Sealing and insulating ducts can improve the efficiency of your heating and cooling system by as much as 20 percent — and sometimes much more.

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. See our [Duct Sealing brochure \(1.13MB\)](#) for more information.

CONSIDER INSTALLING ENERGY STAR QUALIFIED HEATING AND COOLING EQUIPMENT

If your HVAC equipment is more than 10 years old or not keeping your house comfortable, have it evaluated by a professional HVAC contractor. If it is not performing efficiently or needs upgrading, consider replacing it with a unit that has earned the ENERGY STAR. Depending on where you live, replacing your old heating and cooling equipment with ENERGY STAR qualified equipment can cut your annual energy bill by nearly \$200. But before you invest in a new HVAC system, make sure that you have addressed the big air leaks in your house and the duct system. Sometimes, these are the real sources of problems rather than your HVAC equipment.

ASK ABOUT PROPER INSTALLATION OF YOUR NEW EQUIPMENT

Replacing your old heating and cooling equipment with new, energy-efficient models is a great start. But to make sure that you get the best performance, the new equipment must be properly installed. In fact, improper installation can reduce system efficiency by up to 30 percent — costing you more on your utility bills and possibly shortening the equipment's life.