

Central air conditioning maintenance contributes to energy conservation

(NC)—Central air conditioning can account for up to half of your summer electricity bill. In fact, households now use more electricity in the summer months than they do in the winter months, in part due to the operation of their central air conditioning unit.

Making sure your central air conditioning system is operating to its peak potential and using it wisely can contribute greatly to energy conservation.

After all, no one would expect you to run in a marathon, after sitting dormant all winter, so before you set your central air conditioning unit to run all summer long, it is best to get it into tiptop shape first!

An air conditioning service technician can do annual pre-season check-ups to ensure that your central air conditioning is running as efficiently as possible. The technician will check thermostat settings, tighten electrical connections, measure voltage and current on motors, lubricate all moving parts, inspect drainage, check system controls for safety, clean condenser coils, check refrigerant pressures and clean and adjust blower components for proper system air flow.

The technician will also inspect, clean and change air filters, a dirty filter causes higher energy costs and can damage equipment.

Some government agencies and utilities have recognized the importance of maintaining equipment for better energy efficiency and offer incentives and rebates for homeowners to maintain or replace their units. To locate a rebate program

available in your area, a qualified air conditioning service company or for more information on air conditioning maintenance and energy conservation, log onto the Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Contractors of Canada (HRAC) website at www.hracc.ca.

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Is your central air conditioning system ready to handle the summer heat?

(NC)—Do you rely on central air conditioning to make the summer's heat and humidity more bearable? If so, now is the time to ensure that your equipment is in tip-top shape. If you fail to maintain it, your cooling system will suffer a steady decline in performance while your energy use and utility bills will increase.

While there are some maintenance jobs that you can do to prolong the life of your equipment and keep it running at peak efficiency, other jobs are best left to the professionals. Some of the simple things that any homeowner can do include:

- Filters should be routinely cleaned or replaced
- Ensure that the outdoor condensing unit has adequate airflow by checking that the area around the unit is cleared of debris and that foliage is trimmed back at least two feet

Other maintenance tasks are best left to a trained technician. Homeowners searching for a qualified heating

contractor to ensure their cooling system is properly serviced and maintained can access a user-friendly website - www.hracc.ca or call toll-free at 1-877-411-HRAC. Those maintenance tasks include the following:

- The evaporator coil should be checked every year and cleaned as necessary - dirt reduces airflow and insulates the coil, reducing the cooling ability of your air conditioner
- Outdoor condenser coils can become dirty as well and should be cleaned
- Aluminum coil fins on evaporator and condenser coils outdoor should be checked and, if necessary, straightened to ensure that airflow is not blocked
- Supply and return air ducts should be checked for leaks. A qualified contractor can detect and correct duct leaks that could allow cool air to leak out and hot air to leak in, wasting an enormous amount of energy

• The proper working pressures in the refrigeration circuit should be checked. Again, only a qualified contractor will have the tools and experience necessary to determine that your cooling system is operating as it should be.

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Central air conditioners can bring welcome relief during hot, steamy weather, but they can also add unwelcome noise to previously quiet neighbourhoods. Noise inflicts stress, interrupts sleep and generally leaves us feeling agitated and annoyed.

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Replace your central air conditioner the most efficient way

(NC)—Contrary to what many homeowners believe, an air conditioner does not add cool air to an area, but instead removes heat from the air to make it cooler.

It is important to have all the facts when replacing your Central Air Conditioning or Heat Pump System. After all it will affect your comfort level for years to come.

Split air conditioning and heat pump systems typically consist of two parts: an indoor (coil) unit and an outdoor (condensing) unit. These two parts are designed to work together as a "team" to provide top performance and maximum efficiency and comfort. So if you install a high-efficiency outdoor unit, but don't include a new, equally efficient and properly matched indoor unit, the results could be uncomfortable and expensive.

Why a Perfect Match is important

Simply replacing just one of your cooling system's units may offer you the lowest price, but it won't give you the best value. At best, the system may still operate, but it won't perform up to the promised energy efficiency level and provide you with the level of comfort cooling you expect.

At worst, improperly matched indoor and outdoor units can create undue stress on your cooling system, resulting in an unnecessary premature failure.

If you choose a new system using a non-ozone depleting hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) refrigerant, you must replace your indoor and outdoor units with a properly matched combination designed to work using this refrigerant. If you do not change

both units, your system will prematurely fail.

When you consider the costs of repairing or replacing an air conditioner or heat pump, installing a properly matched system the first time makes good sense. Of course, replacing the indoor coil will add to the cost of the installation, but it will mean greater comfort and energy savings in the long run.

Residential air conditioning systems should be installed and maintained by a qualified, licensed, well-trained technician who can verify the system is properly matched. To locate a qualified air conditioning contractor, across Canada, log onto www.hracc.ca or call toll-free at 1-877-411-HRAC (4722).

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