

## Hiring an HVAC Professional

Keeping your home at a comfortable temperature is mission critical as everyone who lives with extreme heat, humidity or cold knows.

HVAC professionals are the ones who keep our air conditioners, heat pumps and furnaces humming. Learn more about these technicians who keep us comfortable in our homes.

### CHECK THEIR CREDENTIALS

HVAC stands for heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration. These professionals work to keep your air conditioner blowing cold and your heater blowing hot. They will also look after the ductwork that brings all that hot and cool air efficiently to the different parts of your home.

HVAC professionals usually come in two forms: the contractor and the technician. A contractor is a person who works for themselves while a technician works for a contractor. In most states, HVAC professionals have to carry at least one certification. That



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### REAL ESTATE 101

#### Consider Full System Replacement

Most HVAC systems last between 15-20 years. They aren't cheap to replace, either, with a price tag that can run into the tens of thousands of dollars. The total cost will depend on the size of your home and the state of your current system. But a full system replacement may actually save you money in the long run. Newer HVAC systems are much more efficient than their older counterparts and, with the correct ductwork and configurations, can save you on your energy bills.

certification comes with training, usually in a specialized school followed by an on-site apprenticeship. HVAC professionals may also pursue national certifications, such as the North American Trade Excellence (NATE) certification, the HVAC Excellence

Certification, the HVAC Quality Installation Standard and the EPA 606 Certification.

#### FINDING A CONTRACTOR

The Air Conditioning Contractors of America says you should ask questions before hiring an HVAC profes-

sional to make sure they will take good care of your system and your family. Here are some questions the association suggests:

- Are your technicians NATE certified? The ACCA says NATE certification is the minimum that your HVAC profes-

sional should have.

- Do you offer continuing education to your employees? Describe your training program.

- Can you provide local references? Make sure to follow up with them.

- Do you offer a service agreement plan? Equipment that is properly maintained runs more efficiently and lasts longer.

- Are you properly licensed for my area? Remember that different states, counties and cities have different contractor licensing rules. Also ask for proof of licensure.

- Do you follow industry standards? Ask about Manual J, an industry standard for determining how big your air conditioning system should be for the size and type of house you live in.

#### WHEN TO GET A PROFESSIONAL

The ACCA says the time to find a good HVAC professional is before you have a problem with your system. Your HVAC professional can then get a good idea of what your system looks like when everything is working and advise you of common problems to watch out for. They may even offer a service plan that will keep your system working efficiently and may also qualify you for service priority and discounts.





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### HOMEWISE GLOSSARY

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**Secondary mortgage market:** Buying and selling existing mortgages, usually in blocks of several loans. **SOURCE:** MLS.com

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