

## Time for a New HVAC?

Winter weather is receding, with summer's heat still months away. That may not seem like the time to take a hard look at your HVAC system, but it actually is.

Off-season pricing and more open maintenance schedules make this an advantageous moment – especially if your system is nearing the end of its natural lifespan. Prices soar for units, as well as parts and service, when temps begin to rise. At the same time, you definitely don't want to endure an HVAC failure in the dog days of summer. Here's what to look for, and what to do next:

### BE ON THE LOOKOUT

An HVAC system will alert you as it begins to wear down, a process that usually takes 15 to 20 years. Pay attention to the year-over-year comparisons on your bill or the electric company's website. If you notice increasing energy costs, it's time to bring in someone to service and perhaps replace the system. Keep up with repair costs, too. Some routine maintenance is expected, but be prepared to make changes



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if these additional costs reach more than half the cost of a new unit.

Other key warning signs include excess dust around your home, or generally poorer air quality. Sometimes, it becomes clear that your HVAC is failing simply because the system begins to struggle to reach and maintain comfort-

able temps. You may notice that it's always running. Call an expert to evaluate the unit, as well as your ductwork and ventilation system.

### LATEST ADVANCES

Modern HVAC systems have been vastly improved over their counterparts from even 10 years ago. They're far more

energy efficient, saving as much as 20-40% on utility bills after the upgrade. Look for new units boasting the Energy Star sticker, meaning they've been certified by the U.S. Department of Energy as more efficient than standard models. These systems can make a difference of hundreds of dollars in energy savings over a

year. HVACs with Season Energy Efficiency Ratios greater than 11.6 are recommended, as are units that have variable-speed air handlers. Fan-only options allow owners to ventilate their homes at a lower cost.

### BEFORE YOU INSTALL

Consider getting a broader energy inspection, where experts will check for leaks that may also be contributing to the system's issues. Be sure you have the recommended size unit and enough duct-work and registers to adequately heat and cool the property based on its square footage. They may have additional recommendations, both large and small. Ask about units with check-filter lights, since they are so helpful in our busy lives, and automatic delay switches that turn off the fan not long after the compressor stops.

Consider adding more insulation to the attic and other crawl spaces, or upgrading to material that better protects your home from the area's specific weather conditions. Be sure that all airflow intakes are clear to the condenser, and that your thermostat is not near sources of heat. Programmable thermostats are also a smart add-on, since they help you save money by using less energy when you are not home.





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### REAL ESTATE 101



#### The Latest Home Tech

Smart thermostats can help you lower bills and lengthen the life of your HVAC system. But that's just the beginning of the cool new technology that is revolutionizing the way we live. Learn more about everything from video doorbells or home-monitoring systems here: [bit.ly/370xonw](https://bit.ly/370xonw).

### HOMEWISE GLOSSARY

**Earnest money:** the deposit money given to the seller or his agent by the potential buyer upon the signing of the agreement of sale to show that he is serious about buying the house. If the sale goes through, the earnest money is applied against the down payment. If the sale does not go through, the earnest money will be forfeited or lost unless the binder or offer to purchase expressly provides that it is refundable. **SOURCE:** Illinois Real Estate Lawyers Association

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