

GET YOUR A/C READY FOR SUMMER— THE HEAT IS COMING

BY PAUL KLEEGER • SUMMER IS SOON APPROACHING, AND IT IS TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT YOUR AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM. WHETHER IT BE HOME, OFFICE OR CLUBHOUSE, MAINTENANCE IS ESSENTIAL TO KEEP THE EQUIPMENT FUNCTIONING AT ITS BEST THROUGHOUT THE HOT SUMMER MONTHS AHEAD. WE CALL THIS MAINTENANCE A "TUNE-UP."

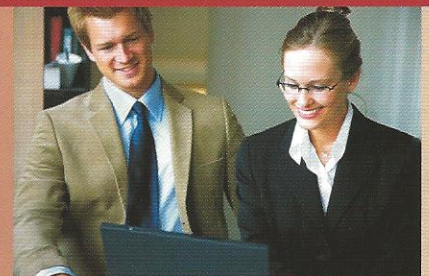
A tune-up is having your equipment inspected prior to the summer heat. This can alleviate your being on the waiting list when HVAC companies get busy. A precision tune-up consists of checking, some or all of the following, (depending on your type of system):

- FREON LEVELS
- HEAD PRESSURE
- SUCTION PRESSURE
- EQUIPMENT OPERATIONS
- SAFETY CONTROLS
- COMPRESSOR CONTACTORS
- OIL LEVELS
- BELT ADJUSTMENT
- EQUIPMENT LUBRICATION
- DRAIN LINES BLOW-OUT
- FILTERS CHANGE-OUT

Your licensed HVAC contractor will have the knowledge of the different types of air filters, and which is the best option for your needs. He may also advise you of the availability of air quality products, ranging from air filtering, air scrubbing or air purification.

There are other maintenance issues of concern. Check the circuit breaker for your equipment to be sure it is not old and weak. If your thermostat requires batteries to operate or requires a backup battery, then the batteries should be changed out at least every year. Please remember to tell your service tech to replace the batteries, as this is often overlooked. Your service

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tech should also let you know when your indoor and outdoor coils need to be cleaned. Let your tech know of any strange noises or smells that you have not heard or smelled before.

Since most tune-ups do not include the duct system, you may want to have your HVAC contractor check the duct system, to look for any air leaks. Properly-running equipment isn't efficient if the cooled air is leaking out into the environment instead of cooling your clubhouse or office. Your contractor will let you know of any other issues that need to be addressed.

You, as the consumer, have the most important role in keeping your system running efficiently and keeping your environment comfortable. Thermostats and their settings are within your control. Setting your thermostat too low will require the air conditioner to run constantly. This will result in the coil icing up, which could cause damage to the equipment. We recommend, when the heat is extreme, that you leave your thermostat at your desired temperature and set the fan setting to "on." To do this, push the fan button until it appears on the thermostat screen. Switch the fan setting from "auto" to "on," or if you have an older thermostat, simply switch it on. This will help maintain an even temperature throughout the area. When the heat wave ends, set your fan back to the auto setting. There is a benefit to keeping your fan running at all times; it will filter the air constantly causing less dust in your environment. This will raise your electric bill a little, but you will save time on less dusting of your furniture.

(Note that not all thermostats work on all systems. They are as individual as the homeowner and the system. If you are looking to change out your thermostat and you buy one from your local hardware or big box store, it may not fit your application and you have wasted your money. Simply discuss your needs with your HVAC contractor and they will install the right one, the first time.)

There are so many variables that contribute to the ambient temperature of your environment, and things that you can do to make it more comfortable. Check your air registers /grills to make sure they are fully opened. Be aware of windows and their treatments; keep them closed as the sun shines in. Make sure that your attic is ventilated to release the heat load (there are thermostatically-controlled ventilators and solar-powered available now). Proper insulation of attic and outer walls—all contribute to keeping you cool.

For your best experience, you need a good HVAC contractor. Talk to people you trust, be leery of the online rating sites, as they require contractors to pay them to belong. Make sure that your contractor is licensed by the California Contractors State

License Board. You can check the license status at www.cslb.ca.gov. Remember—always ask for a license number and make sure it is current.



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