

THE FINAL ANALYSIS

When having this type of work done choose a reputable, licensed contractor. Make sure that they have a real business address in or near your community. A company based in a distant town will probably not be as responsive as a local business.

It is a good idea to get a few different proposals or estimates, but what you should be looking for is what type of system and which company will work best for you. If the proposal from that type of company has a low price – jump on it. However, if you choose solely based on the lowest price – you will have problems, likely sooner than later.

If homeowners would choose the same kind of system that your contractor would install in their own home, they would avoid problems.

Choose wisely – If you hire a reputable contractor, who uses quality materials, your chances of being satisfied when the job has been completed will increase greatly. The initial cost may be more, but the results will make it worthwhile. If you chose the lowest bid – expect to get just what you paid for.

A new heating and air conditioning system should last for twenty years, or more. Make sure your decision reflects that. This is no time to pinch pennies. Spend enough to hire a quality contractor and get a good quality system.

Everyone wants the best quality equipment, the best installation, and the lowest price. Pick any two - getting all three is just not possible!

“ An important thing to remember when having a heating or air conditioning system installed or replaced is the quality of the installation – not only the equipment brand, and certainly not the lowest price”.

James Berry - Kahn Air Conditioning, Inc.

The brand of the equipment chosen is of secondary importance. Many companies profess to install heating and air conditioning systems, and some may even do it correctly. However, if quality equipment is installed without using the best industry-accepted installation practices, and without regard to building codes, you likely will not end up with a very good heating and cooling system.

"There is hardly anything in the world that some man can't make a little worse and sell a little cheaper, and the people who consider price only are this man's lawful prey."

– John Ruskin (1819 – 1900)

Provided to you by:

KAHN *Air Conditioning, Inc.*

You are cordially invited to attend a free Homeowners Workshop held monthly on a Saturday morning. There is no cost to attend. So bring your questions and get even more detailed and useful information.

Call (818) 886-2600 to reserve a seat.

HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING HOMEOWNERS BUYING GUIDE 2007 Edition

This guide will help you when purchasing a completely new air conditioning and/or heating system, or when replacing an existing system.

HOW TO CHECK OUT A CONTRACTOR.

Contact The State Contractors License Board (www.cslb.ca.gov) They will provide lots of free information. Check this website to make sure that the contractor has a valid license to do this type of work. Is their license current? Is the license in their name? Do they have current Workers' Compensation and Liability insurance? You can also find out who owns the company.

Then check with the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.com/) They will list any complaints against that contractor.

Both of these organizations can help you if you have complaints or disputes that you cannot resolve with your contractor. No contractor wants either of these 800-pound gorillas on their back. Contact them before signing any contract.

HOW LONG SHOULD EQUIPMENT LAST ?

A properly installed and maintained system should last for about twenty years. If your old system did not last quite that long, there is likely a good reason. Ask a reputable contractor to determine the cause before replacing your old system.

What efficiency rating is "right" for your home?

The higher the efficiency rating (SEER for air conditioners and AFUE for furnaces) the lower your utility bills will be. Get the highest ratings your budget allows. Your contractor can show you how long the payback (ROI) will be. Spending more initially may pay big dividends in the end.

Does the entire system need to be replaced at the same time?

When one component has failed, the entire system should be evaluated. If it is more than 10 to 15 years old, replacing the entire system may be advisable due to today's more efficient equipment, and the phase out of R-22 Freon. Just know that all of the components must match in order to work properly. A new outdoor condenser will likely not work properly with a cooling coil that is more than 12 years old, and it definitely will not achieve its' projected efficiency rating.

Properly sized refrigerant lines.

The sizing of the copper refrigerant lines is critical for proper operation, energy savings, system capacity, and equipment longevity. Manufacturers' will provide this information. Make sure and ask to see this data.

Do you have the right vent pipe?

The vent pipe removes exhaust gases from the furnace. The size and material of the vent pipe is crucial to proper operation and safety. Each unit has specific requirements. The contractor will advise you if your vent

WHAT ABOUT DUCT SIZING?

Properly sized ducts are critical for energy savings, balanced airflow, quiet operation, and even temperatures. Ask to review the duct layout and how the duct system was designed.

WHAT ABOUT THE DUCT MATERIAL?

If your ducts are insulated with asbestos, it's time to replace them. Asbestos is a known carcinogen, and these ducts are not suggested for any air conditioning system. A licensed abatement contractor must remove the ducts. Have new flex ducts with minimum of 2" of insulation with Mylar covering installed.

What is the proper capacity for your house?

Your contractor should show you the results of a Manual J Load Calculation. This will determine what size system your house needs. A system that is too small will not cool your home on the hotter days. A system that is too big is worse. It will short cycle, and will not remove the desired amount of humidity. It also will not last as long as it should have if it was sized properly.

SHOULD YOU PURCHASE A MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT?

It is important to perform regular maintenance on your system. Replacing the filter is a good start, but there are many other components to be cleaned and checked. If you want your system to last, and provide reliable heating and cooling, have it serviced regularly by a NATE Certified Technician. It will help prevent breakdowns, and save money in the long run.

What about extended warranties?

These machines will eventually break down. You can protect your investment for less than \$100 per year. Most manufacturers offer extended warranties for parts and labor for up to 10 years. This is money well spent.

OTHER THINGS TO CHECK BEFORE HIRING ANY CONTRACTOR

- How long have they been in business? This is not all-important, just one indicator.
- Did they answer all of your questions? If questions are sidestepped, be very concerned.
- Visit some of their current projects. Ask the homeowner if they are doing the job exactly the way they told them. Being clean and neat is also a good indicator.
- You can ask for referrals, but these may not be of as much value as visiting some of their current projects.
- Have they told you that permits are required? If not, what are they trying to hide? The permits are to protect the homeowner. The air conditioner needs a 230-volt electrical circuit, and the furnace has a connection to a natural gas line. It is important to have an objective third party (inspector) check to make sure that your new system is safe.
- Don't sign any contract until you are sure about everything that is included – or not included. Do not accept any verbal agreements.
- The law states that you can not be asked to pay more than 10% down, or \$1,000.00 – whichever is less.
- Finally - never, never, pay with cash!