



New Air Conditioners & Furnaces Don't Always Cut Utility Bills: Report

(Bellingham, WA) -- Spring is in the air, and summer is not far behind. Last winter's record cold temperatures and high natural gas prices are making homeowners look for ways to cut their utility bills. Many are investing in a new higher efficiency heating and cooling system. However, a recent consumer protection report states that although the latest furnaces, heat pumps and air conditioners should consume as little as half the fuel as older inefficient models, many homeowners don't get the utility bill savings they expect and deserve.

The Comfort Institute report explains why this can happen and how to ensure a new high efficiency heating and cooling system saves on utility bills. The report is available online at no charge at www.comfortinstitute.org. It provides information homeowners should know before talking to contractors. The report discloses little known facts about heating and air conditioning systems - information that many contractors aren't even aware of.

"The wrong size or type of equipment, improperly installed, and connected to a leaky and undersized duct system, could sentence you to over 20 years of excessive utility and repair bills," says Comfort Institute researcher Brendan Reid. "Don't rush into this very important decision. If you make the wrong choice, you probably won't be able to justify tearing it out and starting all over again. You'll literally have to live IN your decision for as long as you own your home."

The report was prepared by the Comfort Institute's Consumer Protection Division. It summarizes recent utility company, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency research. Field studies reveal that due to installation errors or oversights, most newly installed systems waste 25% to 40% of the energy bought to run them. Even after investing thousands of dollars, many people still suffer from uncomfortable rooms and high utility bills.

The report also draws on the training resources of heating and cooling equipment manufacturers and trade associations. Finally, it shares advice from consumer protection groups, publications and investigative TV news stories.

Authorities have determined that the most important step is to pick the right contractor: one who has the training, instruments and procedures to ensure the new system will work the way the manufacturer intended. A good contractor will offer to perform a computerized equipment sizing calculation and a "Whole House Comfort Checkup", using special diagnostic instruments such as an Infiltrometer blower door and an air flow capture hood.

Consumers can download a free copy of the complete report entitled "Tips and Secrets To Buying a New Heating and Cooling System", at www.comfortinstitute.org. This Web site also contains another free report entitled "How To Identify A Good Heating and Cooling Contractor".

For those who do not have access to the Internet, the two printed reports are also available together for \$10 (postage paid) by calling the Comfort Institute at 1-800-933-5656.

"The good news is that it is possible for many homeowners to cut their heating and cooling bills in half," says Reid. "A properly selected and installed new high efficiency system is much more dependable and increases comfort. Combined with some commonly needed repairs to the ductwork and house thermal envelope, a new high efficiency system can provide some real relief from rising utility bills."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Comfort Institute Inc. is an international indoor comfort research, training and consumer protection organization based in Bellingham, Washington with trainers and offices located throughout the United States and Canada.

Photos are available to accompany this story. For a computer file version of this article, visit the web site, and choose "Media Support" or contact Brendan Reid, Senior Researcher at 613-723-2453 or by email: breid@comfortinstitute.org

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