

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Tips On Choosing A Heating/Cooling System Contractor

Making sure their home stays warm and comfortable as the weather turns cooler leads the "to do" list for many homeowners. This can include inspecting, servicing or replacing current heating & air conditioning systems.

Selecting heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) contractor to inspect, upgrade or install a new system can be as critical to the system's successful operation as the equipment itself. The Community Guide offers these suggestions to help homeowners select a HVAC contractor:

- Start by doing your homework. Even a little bit of information gleaned from books, magazines and online resources (dealer and manufacturer Web sites) can be valuable when you interview a potential contractor.
- Get recommendations from friends, co-workers, and real estate agents and home improvement specialists. Use whatever advertising you have at your disposal.
- References often have the greatest impact on a homeowner who is considering a contractor. However, references should be considered in conjunction with other information gained through your search.

- Research the range of services a contractor has to offer. Does the list of services include scheduled maintenance? How about repairs? Is the contractor available 24 hours a day?



- Don't forget to ask if a contractor's installers and technicians are certified by organizations such as NATE (North American Technician Excellence).
- Make sure to ask if the contractor has state licenses, local licenses and liability insurance. Reputable contractors will have these licenses and policies. Liability should apply to the contractor and his or her employees as well as any subcontractors. (A subcontractor will often carry his or her own liability insurance.)
- In many cases, a reputation for quality, reliability and dependability grows with length of service to a community. That's why the number of years a contractor has been in business can be important.
- A good HVAC contractor will visit your home to make an on-site inspection firsthand, before any equipment recommendations are made.