

YOUR HOME

Helping Your HVAC System Operate At Its Peak

(NAPSA)—Lowering your home's heating and cooling bills can be easier when your heating, ventilating and air-conditioning (HVAC) system is working at its peak efficiency.

The good news is that small steps can make a big difference when it comes to improving the way an HVAC system operates.

Here are a few tips:

- Check and maintain your insulation. Improperly insulated walls, floors, attics, basements and crawl spaces drain away heat and can also lead to moisture imbalance. Adding weatherstripping and caulk around windows and doors can also go a long way to improving your home's insulation.

- Adjust your thermostat. Raising your thermostat by 5 degrees in mild weather and lowering it by 5 degrees during the heating season can decrease your energy bills and still not affect your home's comfort. Install a programmable thermostat to keep temperatures regular.

- Keep vents and returns free of obstructions. Don't lay carpet over vents, place furniture over or in front of them or obstruct the flow of air.

- Clean your air filters. Check them every couple of weeks and change them at least twice in the season or as directed by the manufacturer.

- For optimum comfort, have your system checked by a certified technician at the beginning of the cooling season and again in preparation for the heating season.

A certified HVAC technician, such as those certified by NATE (North American Technician Excel-



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lence), can help homeowners evaluate their current system and is likely to be extremely knowledgeable about high-efficiency systems, such as those with an ENERGY STAR label, which can reduce the impact on the environment and can also save you money.

NATE-certified technicians are skilled professionals who have proven their knowledge in the HVAC/R (air-conditioning or refrigeration) industry by passing specialized certification tests.

Another resource is a Web site called HVACRAAdvice.com. It features a contractor locator where homeowners can type in their ZIP code to find companies that employ NATE-certified technicians and an energy-savings calculator.

The site also provides a number of useful documents and information pages, such as heating/cooling checklist, maintenance tips and information on how to make your home more energy efficient.

To learn more, visit www.HVACRAAdvice.com.