

Florence Energy News

Deciding when to purchase a new central air conditioning system

If your cooling system is less than 10 years old, it should still have some life left in it. You can expect as many as 10 to 15 years of service from properly installed and maintained cooling equipment. To help make this long service life a reality, it is a good idea to have your cooling system inspected and adjusted on an annual basis. If your system is over 10 years old, then you should definitely place it on an annual maintenance program. Good preventive maintenance will ensure your system runs safely and efficiently for a long time.

If you are the owner of an older air conditioning system, you may be wondering if it will last another year. If you are concerned that it may stop working in the middle of the summer, leaving you and your home hot and soggy, it's probably time to call on an expert to consider replacement or repair. Home air conditioning systems can be expected to last for 15 years or more. Good maintenance practices will, of course, provide an even longer service life. Deciding when to replace an old cooling system is not easy.

Unless your present system is old and in very poor working condition, it may be hard to justify a new high-efficiency system on energy savings alone. If your system doesn't seem to be working as well as it used to, you should have a service person look at it to determine the likely cause

of the problem. If there is a significant problem, simply comparing the price to repair the system with the cost of replacement will give you a good idea of what you should do. Keep in mind, however, that due to improvements in efficiency, a new system will have the added benefit of reducing your operating cost. If your system is over 10 years old, you may want to consider a new unit. The annual dollar savings from installing a new system may pay for itself in a short time, especially if you have a large home with a high cooling load.

Choosing a system type

When choosing a central air conditioning unit, there are a couple of options with regard to central air conditioning types. You can choose to install a cooling-only system or a heat pump, which will provide heating and cooling. If you currently have a heat pump, then you will probably want to stick with a heat pump. Otherwise, you will have to add some type of heating to your system. Heat pumps are very popular in the South, where they comprise 66% of the central air conditioning systems. If you live in a home with electric heat and central cooling, you should consider switching to a heat pump for heating and cooling. By doing so, you will save a good percentage on your heating bill.

Other Thoughts

Your cooling system actually may be a heating and cooling system. If you have a warm-air furnace and central air conditioning, it is likely that both use the same distribution ductwork. Furthermore, the same blower distributes warm air in the winter and cold air in the

summer. The point is, when you replace one part of the system, it is a good idea to consider replacing the whole thing. If you do so, you will then benefit from a completely compatible integrated system which will provide better performance and reliability than a mixture of old and new components.

There are other aspects of the cooling system to consider. There are controls and components such as thermostats, dampers, air filters, and condensate pumps which are not part of the air conditioner or heat pump but are important parts of the system. There is distribution ductwork for supply and return of conditioned air. All parts of the system should be put in good working order when a new system is purchased. Definitely consider upgrading controls as they will have a lot of impact on how comfortable you are and how much energy you use.

Don't buy an oversized cooling system. First of all, you should take care of all your weatherization improvements before buying a new cooling system. This means adding attic insulation, sealing air leaks, and caulking and weather-stripping windows and doors. Then make sure that the contractor performs a cooling load calculation on the house. The new system may not need to be the same size as the old one. When you make your home more weatherproof, one of the benefits is that your cooling system doesn't need to be as big.

For more information on choosing the right cooling system for your home visit www.energyright.com

Bank Draft Program

With today's busy lifestyle, many of us want to simplify our everyday tasks. One good way to do this is to enroll in Florence Utilities' Bank Draft Program to pay your utility bill. By participating in this program, you no longer have to write and mail checks to pay your utility bill each month. Once you are enrolled in the program, there's nothing to mail, no checks to write, and no stamps to buy. It saves you both time and money.

Each month under this program, on your payment due date, Florence Utilities automatically drafts the exact amount of your bill from your bank account. This convenient payment option insures you will never pay a late fee because you forgot to pay your utility bill.

You will continue to receive a bill each month so you can monitor your account. It will be marked "Paid by Bank Draft." We encourage you to review the bill each month. It is important to know how much money is being drafted from your account, as well as when it will occur.

This program is open to all classes of customers – commercial and industrial, as well as residential. Most of our customers can qualify for it. However, it does require the customer to maintain a checking or savings account at a bank or credit union, although the bank or credit union does not have to be local.

If a customer has a "Cash Basis Only" status at Florence Utilities, they cannot participate until this has expired.

There is no charge for this service. However, it is the customer's responsibility to make sure there are sufficient funds in his/her account to pay the draft when it is presented. Florence Utilities charges for drafts which are returned unpaid by the bank. We also reserve the right to remove those customers with multiple returned drafts from the program.

This program is not for everyone. However, many of our customers have found that it works well for them. There are approximately 4,700 accounts paid through it monthly. If you try the program, and are not satisfied, you can easily withdraw.

If you have questions concerning this program, please call Florence Utilities at (256) 718-3221. If you would like to enroll in this program, please call us at the same number, and we will send you an application. Or if you prefer, you can apply through our website at florenceutilities.com under the Pay Your Bill link.

HOLIDAY CLOSING
SEPTEMBER 6 LABOR DAY

Florence ENERGY

NEWS YOU CAN USE FROM FLORENCE UTILITIES

Have you been wondering if it's time to replace your central air conditioning system? Inside this issue of Florence Energy you'll find helpful information about some of the signs that it may be time to purchase a new system, as well as some tips on maintenance and repair of your old unit.

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