

Home Maintenance Tips:

Alert: Failure to comply with all manufacturer's instructions may result in fire or combustion that can cause property damage, serious injury or death. Before you perform any kind of maintenance, disconnect all electrical power to the unit before removing access panels; and be alert for sharp edges when handling parts or reaching into units. If performing maintenance not included in the list below, check with a Becker & Becker representative to determine if the service will void manufacturer's warranties and guarantees. It's better to be safe than sorry.

Do-It-Yourself:

Check Filter - Check the air filter in your furnace or fan coil each month. A dirty filter will cause excessive wear on your furnace, air conditioner or heat pump. Replace your filter when necessary, or clean it if you have the reusable type. (If you have a reusable filter, make sure it's completely dry before you re-install it.)

Remove Debris - Keep your outdoor condensing unit free of debris. If you keep grass clippings, leaves, shrubbery and debris away from your outdoor unit, it should only require minimal care. Check the base pan (under the unit) occasionally and remove debris, to help the unit drain properly.

Brush Exterior - If the exterior of your outdoor coil becomes dirty, use a brush or a vacuum cleaner with a soft brush attachment to clean the surface. To clean dirt that is deep in the coil, contact a Becker & Becker representative to schedule maintenance.

Check Level - Make sure your outdoor coil stays in a level position. If the support for your outdoor coil shifts or settles and the unit is no longer level, re-level it to make sure moisture drains properly out from under the unit.

Inspect Ventilation - Inspect your furnace's combustion area and vent system before each heating season. If you find dirt, soot or rust, your system may not operate properly or at its peak efficiency. Contact Becker & Becker and do not operate your furnace until it is professionally inspected and/or repaired.

Clean Humidifier - Clean your humidifier at the beginning of every heating season. Review your owner's manual for the proper procedure to replace the evaporator pad and clean external components.

Clean Air Cleaner - The pre-filter and collection cells of an electronic air cleaner should be cleaned at least two or three times per year.

Money Saving:

Insulation - Be sure your home is adequately insulated. Adding insulation to attic areas is usually pretty easy. Other areas, such as outside walls, provide a more challenging project if extra insulation is needed.

Seals - Check the seals around windows, doors, electrical outlets or any other potential sources for escaping air. Seal these areas using a good quality caulk, and be sure to re-examine your handiwork every few years.

Weather Stripping - Inside your home, weather stripping around moving parts of windows and doors can help seal off potential areas of leakage or drafts. Storm doors and windows can provide additional energy savings by preventing air loss and by creating an insulating layer of air.

Programmable Thermostat - With a programmable thermostat you can program winter temperature at 62° at night, then back to 68° during the day. This simple program can save up to 15% on heating bills. We recommend having your furnace professionally serviced or inspected each fall. To schedule service call Becker & Becker Plumbing & Heating. We service and maintain most makes and models of air conditioners, furnaces and heat pumps.

Prevention:

Water pools next to air conditioner or furnace

Air conditioners and high-efficiency combustion furnaces create significant condensation, which exits through a plastic drain tube. This should go into a floor drain or be carried away by a small "condensate pump." If water is pooling at the base of the appliance, something may be blocking the water's flow, or leaking, or the pump may not be working.

1) Look to see if one of the tubes is leaking. If it is, replace it.

2) Test the condensate pump by pouring water into its pan. If the pump doesn't start, either it isn't receiving power or it is broken. Be sure that it's plugged in and test the circuit. If it's broken, replace it.

3) If the pump runs but doesn't empty the pan, the ball-like check valve just before the discharge tube is probably stuck. Unscrew the check valve, loosen the ball inside, and look for an obstruction.

If it appears that a condensation drain tube is clogged with algae, remove it if possible (you may have to cut it and replace it later with a coupling). Run a wire through it to clear it. To kill the algae, pour a dilute solution of bleach (1 part bleach to 16 parts water) through the pipe.

4) Ice may be blocking the tube. If this is the case, be sure the filter isn't dirty. If the filter appears to be fine, the air conditioner's refrigerant supply is probably low. This is when it's time to call a Becker & Becker air-conditioning technician. Turn the unit off so the ice can melt.

Air ducts are noisy

Many heating/cooling ducts are metal so they conduct noise quite readily from the air-handling unit to your rooms. To break the conduction of sound, you can have a heating contractor insert flexible insulation ductwork between the heating/cooling system and the ductwork runs.

If you hear a pinging or popping sound coming from the ductwork, this may be caused by thermal expansion or by air blowing past a loose flap of metal. Track along the duct runs, listening for the sound. If you find it, make a small dent in the sheet metal to provide a more rigid surface that's less likely to move as it heats and cools.

If your air conditioner doesn't go on automatically:

- 1) Be sure the thermostat is set to "cool" and below the current temperature.
- 2) Check for a tripped breaker or blown fuse.
- 3) Make sure the furnace power switch and outdoor condenser's power switch are turned on.
- 4) If the unit still won't come on, call Becker & Becker for a service appointment.

Preventing Kitchen Drain Clogs

No plumbing problem is more common or more frustrating than a clogged drain.

- Kitchen sink drains clog most often because of a buildup of grease that traps food particles.
- Hair and soap are often at fault in bathroom drains.

Drains can usually be cleared easily and inexpensively, but taking some simple precautions will help you avoid stop-ups. Proper disposal of kitchen waste will keep sink drain clogs to a minimum.

- Don't pour grease down the kitchen sink.
- Don't wash coffee grounds down the sink. Throw them out.
- Be sparing with chemical cleaners, particularly if you have brass, steel, or cast-iron traps and drainpipes; some caustic chemicals can corrode metal pipes.
- If used no more than once every few months, cleaners containing sodium hydroxide or sodium nitrate can be safe and effective.
- Clean floor drain strainers. Some tubs, showers, and basement floor drains have strainers that are screwed into the drain opening. You can easily remove these strainers and reach down into the drain with a bent wire to clear out accumulated debris. And be sure to scrub the strainer.
- Clean pop-up stoppers in the bathroom sink and the tub regularly. Lift out sink pop-ups once a week and rinse them off.
- Clogged tub drains are usually caused by hair build-up. Remove the overflow plate on a tub and pull up the pop-up assembly to reach the spring or rocker arm. Remove accumulated hair and rinse thoroughly.
- Keep the sewer pipes from the house free of tree roots that may invade them. If roots are a particular problem in your yard, you may need to call in professionals once a year or so to clear the pipes. They'll use an electric auger to cut out the roots. As a preventative measure use *Root-X* <http://www.rootx.com> once a year.

Flush the drain-waste and vent systems whenever you go up onto your house roof to clean out downspouts or gutters. Run water from a garden hose into all vents, giving them a minute or two of full flow.