



Home Inspection Services Newsletter

August, 2010

Educational: AC Condensate Water

We have covered this topic in several newsletters but we see issues weekly. Since the consequences of condensate drain failures can be very expensive (water damage, mold, etc.), this topic is worth covering again.

Condensate 101: AC systems squeeze moisture out of the air resulting in cooler and drier air. This moisture (called condensate) drains off of the evaporator coil and into a pan. A drain line from the pan carries the condensate to the building's exterior (95% of the time) or into the homes waste system.

Here's what you need to know:

The location of the air handler/evaporator coil for each AC system:

- Packaged units: System is one piece and evaporator coil is in the unit
- Split systems: System is two pieces and evaporator coil/air handler may be in the attic, garage, hall or exterior closet

The location of the condensate line termination:

- Roof mounted packaged units: At the roof edge or into a plumbing vent
- Attic air handlers: Through the home's exterior wall or into a plumbing vent or plumbing waste pipe
- Hall or garage closet: Through the exterior wall or pumped to a plumbing waste pipe
- Exterior closet: Through the exterior wall

Your Job: When the AC units are operating, is condensate water flowing to its designed termination? This simple task is important and needs to be checked regularly. If you have pipes through the side wall, are the low pipes dripping when the system is operating? **Caution;** if you have a high and a low pipe on the exterior wall with water dripping from the high pipe, your primary line is blocked!

Why do condensate drain systems fail:

- Pipes separate
- Bugs build nests in pipes (enter at the pipes termination)

- Dirt, dust, and debris block entry to the drain pipe (at the pan)
- Condensate pumps stop working

Monthly Question: Why test the home's water shut off valve?

Older water valves often have not been operated in years. We don't test them because there is a reasonable probability that they will break (sometimes in the open and sometimes in the closed position). It is important for the homeowner to know that the valve will work to facilitate an emergency shut off. Keeping a plumber's key (or T wrench) available is also recommended for shutting the valve at the water meter.

Maintenance Items for August: Holes & Bees

Three or four times each summer, we notice honey leaking from an exterior wall of a home. This means that honey bees have built a hive in the wall and subsequently died (or been exterminated) but the honey comb is still in the wall. Bees can get through small holes on the exterior siding or gaps at the soffits, etc. Sealing holes on exterior walls is important to keep pests out.

Safety Tip: Air conditioner over current protection

New AC units are more energy efficient and typically require less power. The manufactures label states the maximum circuit breaker size for protection of the unit. If you've had an AC unit replaced, check the label. Be sure that the circuit breaker or local fuse is sized properly. Our experience is that AC contractors do not check over current protection devices when a new unit is installed.

Inspection classes for realtors: Please feel free to call on me. I have several prepared power point presentations about the home inspection process but am also happy to come in an answer questions.

Let our experience work for you!



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