



Home Inspection Services Newsletter

February 1, 2006

Educational Section: **SEER Ratings & New Standards**

When **SEER** is discussed, it is in reference to the efficiency of Air Conditioners and Heat Pumps. Effective Jan 23rd, 2006 most (exceptions for wall mounted units) residential heat pumps **manufactured** or **imported** into the USA must meet a minimum **13 SEER** rating.

Background:

SEER: Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio

DOE: Department Of Energy establishes the efficiency regulations

1992: The last time SEER minimum standard was set at 10

30%: The energy savings of a 13 SEER unit compared to a 10 SEER unit

\$1 Billion: The estimated dollar savings over the next 25 years in the US

1970 and earlier: 5 Seer is standard

1971 - 1975: 6 “

1976 – 1980: 7 “

1981 - 1991: 8 “

What does the 13 **SEER** (minimum) standard mean to you?

Building a new home? Since builders can still install units manufactured before 1/23/06, you may wish to specify an efficiency of 13 SEER or greater for your air conditioner or heat pump (see next item).

Replacing an existing HVAC split system unit? This area is tricky in that higher efficiency units typically will require replacement of refrigerant lines, evaporator coils, and air handlers (typically in attic or garage). This adds considerably to the cost.

Repairing an existing unit? You should be able to obtain parts and repair an older, less efficient unit. Keep in mind that if your old unit is a 5 to 8 SEER, you may be able to cut your HVAC energy bills as much as 50% by upgrading. We recommend that you work with your HVAC contractor or energy provider to perform the payback calculations.

More information on this topic is available at: www.ari.org

Questions of the Month:

What is the Temperature Split?

In order to determine if the Air conditioner (or heat pump) is cooling properly, the difference in air temperature between the air return and the closest room diffuser is measured. Temperature differentials (splits) between 15 and 24 degrees Fahrenheit are considered normal. Too low of a split indicates that the unit is not cooling enough while too high indicates that the air is not flowing past the evaporator coil fast enough (a very dirty filter may be the culprit). Usually, the services of a licensed HVAC contractor are recommended to determine the cause and remedy of a temperature split that is out of the normal range.

Inspection Item for February:

(Each month, we select appropriate items so that over a 12 month period you are reminded to attend to most common household maintenance/inspection items.)

Caulk and Grout: These very inexpensive materials are utilized to prevent moisture from penetrating behind tubs, bathroom and kitchen sinks, shower stalls, and bathroom floors (proximate to toilets and tubs). Take a few minutes and examine these areas. Caulk or grout as needed. This is so much less expensive than tearing out moisture damaged and mold prone materials. **CAUTION:** Don't seal areas that you suspect are wet – concealed areas must be clean and dry.

Safety Tip of the Month: **Egress and Ingress**

Egress: Exiting a home through the bedroom window can be a life saver in times of emergency. Do you have an operable and accessible window in each bedroom? We frequently see furniture blocking windows and windows that will not open with normal force. If these windows have security bars be sure that they can be opened from the inside.

Ingress: Are your locks effective? We see sliding doors on a weekly basis where the locks are no longer aligned and can be opened by just a little extra force or by pushing the door in slightly.

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