



## Home Inspection Services Newsletter

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October, 2007

### Educational Section: **AC Replacement**

Replacing Air conditioning equipment is a considerably more expensive proposition than it was in 2005. The additional expense results from DOE's (Department of Energy) minimum efficiency mandate for AC units built after Jan of 2006. The new minimum standard is 13 SEER (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Rating). The old standard of 10 SEER was set in 1992. Pricing for AC equipment replacement varies considerably base upon the model, size of the unit, configuration on the cooling system, and on the installer. But here are some rules of thumb:

**Packaged units** (roof or side wall mounted) have increased in price by about 25%. Installation effort (cost) should be similar to the older unit.

**Split systems** (Compressor on the ground & air handler in attic, closet, or garage): The equipment has increase in price by 25%. However, with the 10 SEER units, if the compressor failed, only the ground unit was generally replaced. With a 13 SEER replacement, the air handler has to be replaced as well. If a gas furnace is part of the system, most of the time that will also be replaced. This means that a system replacement for a 3 ton unit with a gas furnace may cost \$7 to \$8,000 as opposed to replacing the ground unit for \$3500 (as you could with the 10 SEER system). In some situations, it is possible just to replace the compressor and not the whole ground unit (leaving you with a workable 10 SEER system and a \$2000 bill).

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Maintain your current system: Change the filters monthly and have the system professionally serviced annually
2. Consider a home warranty: Be very deliberate in investigating what the warranty company covers. Many companies have dollar limits or will only repair (not replace), etc.
3. Replace your AC system in the winter when business is slow and you can take the time to shop around.

## Maintenance Item for Oct: **Pool Filter & Yard drips**

(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.)

Days are shorter and temperatures are cooler. This means that plants need watering less often and the pool filter time can be reduced.

Plant watering: Rule of thumb; water your yard plants the same amount of time but less often.

Pool filter: Rule of Thumb; run one hour for every 10 degrees of temperature (right now 7 hours). Remember, most electricity service provider's rate plans charge less for night time energy use.

## Question of the Month: **What is a double tap?**

Many circuit breakers in an electrical panel are designed for the attachment of one wire (some are designed for two). For those breakers designed for one wire, a second wire attachment is called a double tap. The safety concern on double tapped circuit breakers is that insufficient wire contact with the breaker may result in arcing (fire hazard). Installers of yard watering systems are the most common culprits for double taps.

## Safety Tip of the Month: **Smoke Detectors**

Test them using the test button. Have a supply of 9 Volt batteries on hand. If a detector fails to respond or chirps after test, we recommend replacing the batteries in all units. If your detectors cannot be tested, we recommend replacing them with testable detectors. Current safety standards call for one detector per bedroom, in halls proximate to bedrooms, and on each floor. Consider adding additional detectors.

Inspection class for realtors: Arizona Academy of Real Estate (Bell and 99<sup>th</sup> Ave) offers a **3 credit hour course** "lowering risk through inspection". This monthly course is taught by Mark Andrews (yours truly). Please contact the Academy for details. Ph# 623 505 5380

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