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Air Conditioner Preventative Maintenance

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With summer already upon us, now is not the time to have to worry about staying cool this summer. Our local HVAC repairmen are already busy and having to go any amount of time without A/C is just absurd.

Now we can begin with the state recommendations to raise our thermostats to ridiculous temperatures. We can check the seals around doors and windows to prevent cooling loss or cover them with reflective material to keep the heat out. Having a few fans around will also help keep the air moving. However, the most important thing is to keep your A/C in good shape to prevent needing to take drastic measures.

Let's start with the easiest thing to do. Change your air filter! Every month! No excuses! Put it on the calendar. Set a reminder on your phone. Just get it done. This will keep the coil clean and allow proper air flow across it to cool your home.

While you are changing your filter, check the drain pan to ensure it is draining properly. During the summer months, your air conditioner creates a huge amount of condensate which can also create an excellent environment for algae to grow. Algae can clog the drain lines and create a small flooding situation in your home. Adding a cap full of bleach to your drain pan once a month will kill the algae and keep you from having to clean a large mess. You may find chlorine tablets to place in the drain pan as well.

Your outdoor condenser unit needs attention too. First, check the wires running to the unit. It is not uncommon to break the small brown thermostat wire running to the control panel (especially when one gets overzealous with a weed eater!). Next, check for ants and put poison or diatomaceous earth around the electrical connections. Ants and bugs like electrical connections and can cause them to short out leaving you sweating. Removing foliage from around the condenser will also prevent bugs and increase air flow.

The cooling fins around the condenser are also particularly important. They are made of thin aluminum and can be smashed easily. They also collect dirt and debris (especially during heavy rain). Inspect the fins for damage and then wash them out with a water hose being careful not to use a hard jet stream that can bend the fins. Wash top to bottom from the outside. Look inside to see that clear water is coming through indicating a clean coil for proper air flow.

These few tips should help keep the repairman away. However, it is always a good idea to have your unit inspected by a professional at the beginning of the season after you have taken these steps to help yourself. The older your unit is the more important it is to maintain them often.