

Keep your cool this summer

As summer approaches, it's time to consider turning on your air conditioner for the first time or think of other ways to keep your home cool.

Jeffrey Brookfield, owner and general manager of AmeriSpec Home Inspection Service in Georgetown and Cambridge, offers up a few suggestions.

If you don't have an air conditioner:

- Shelter windows with awnings and keep blinds closed on hot, sunny days to prevent the sun from increasing the interior temperature.

- Install compact fluorescent lighting to produce less waste heat than incandescent lights. Keep lights and computers turned off when possible.

- Cook outdoors (i.e. use a barbecue) to avoid creating indoor heat.

- Hang clothes outside to dry; clothes dryers generate a lot of indoor heat.

And to keep your central air conditioner in good running condition, you should:

- Inspect and clean/replace the blower fan filter (usually located in the return air duct at the furnace) every two months or as recommended by the manufacturer.

- Carefully vacuum or brush clean the outdoor coil to keep it clear of dirt, leaves, and grass clippings; the coil can be carefully cleaned with a garden hose after debris is vacuumed off.

- Both the blower fan and outdoor fan should be cleaned and lubricated by a

heating and cooling contractor.

Brookfield adds a note of caution before turning on your unit for the first time in the summer, "For most models of central air conditioning units the unit should not be turned on when the outdoor temperature is below 18C or has been below 18C in the past 24 hours, or when the power has been on for less than 12 to 24 hours. Under these circumstances, refrigerant in the compressor can mix with lubricating oil, providing poor lubrication and potentially resulting in seizing the compressor."

If, after completing these suggestions, your air conditioner is performing poorly, Amerispec recommends hiring a qualified contractor to undertake a more thorough servicing, such as checking the refrigerant level or making electrical or mechanical checks and adjustments.

If you find that your central air conditioner is at the end of its life, there is some good news. The federal government through its ecoENERGY program will offer home owners a grant of \$200 to upgrade your unit to an EnergyStar model.

For additional information on other home inspection tips or the ecoENERGY program, go to Amerispec's website at www.amerispec.net/lma or their blog at www.amerispec.blogspot.com

—Article provided by AmeriSpec Home Inspection Service



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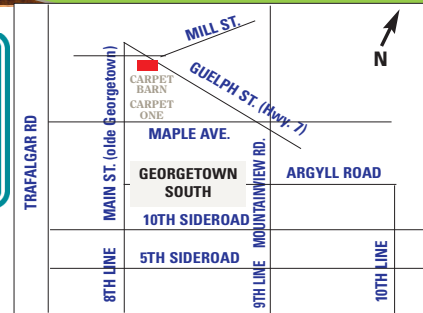
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