

Summer forecast: Heat wave returns

The return of the heat wave means a long, hot summer is sizzling on the horizon. Heat waves made a comeback during the Summer of 1993, with 41 cities reporting an increase in cooling degree days from Victoria Day through Labour Day. A cooling degree day is defined as the accumulation of degrees which the average daily temperature is above 65 F (18 C).

For example, a mean temperature of 78 F yields 13 cooling degree days. The more cooling degree days, the more energy used to cool our homes and workplaces.

The cooler, wetter summers of the early-1990s can be traced to two significant events: the June, 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo, in the Philippines, reflected enough sunlight to cool the earth by 1 F, and the reappearance of El Niño, the vast pool of warm water that develops every two- to seven-years in the eastern Pacific Ocean off South America. El Niño's return in early-1992, set off a chain of atmospheric events that among other things, brought heavy rains to Texas and contributed to storms in draught-plagued California, as well as across the country and into the Northeast in the winter of 1992-93.

Taking into account the gradual diminishing of both the cooling effect of the Mount Pinatubo eruption and the disappearance of El Niño, the satellite data suggests a global warming trend that, by the late-1990s, will cause average global temperatures to exceed the record levels of the late-1980s.

Don't Wait For A Crisis

If these findings are correct, now is an ideal time for homeowners to consider purchasing a central air conditioning system or replacing one that is more than 10 years old. Today's systems are up to 60 percent more energy efficient than a typical 10- to 15-year old unit.

"No one wants to walk in after a hard day's work to a home that isn't cool because the air conditioner isn't working properly," says Derrick Marris, director of product marketing, Payne Heating & Cooling. "You should be able to count on being cool and comfortable when you need to be."

Manufacturers have developed new air conditioners with energy savings, quiet operation and whole-house comfort in mind. "Surveys show that while homeowners want comfort, they also want a system that responds to peak demands and performs quietly," Marris adds.

Fighting Indoor Air Pollution

"Total indoor comfort does not end with the selection of an air conditioning unit," notes Marris. "In fact, this is the perfect time to have a contractor evaluate your home's indoor air quality, as well as energy efficiency."

While today's homes are built or retrofitted to maximize energy efficiency, the result can often be harmful to their inhabitants. Indoor air quality problems, most commonly associated with modern office buildings, are becoming more prevalent as homes are built "tighter" to keep warm air from escaping in winter, and from entering in summer. Pollutants are trapped indoors, and the results can be harmful over time.

The simple answer to this serious problem is to open the windows. But doing so compromises many of the home's energy-saving features. However, there is good news for concerned homeowners: for the annual cost of operating a 30-watt lightbulb, today's homes can be protected against the residential equivalent of "sick building syndrome."

A healthy, energy-efficient answer to these problems is a heat recovery ventilator. When installed in conjunction with the heating and cooling system, heat recovery ventilators like Payne's Vent Perfect™ are designed to remove indoor air pollutants and draw fresh, outside air into the home.

By recycling heat into the fresh air stream and simultaneously exhausting the stale, over-humid air from the home, Vent Perfect recovers up to 84 percent of the exiting air's heat.

Another solution to the indoor air quality question is Payne's electronic air cleaner, which effectively and affordably removes dust, dirt, smoke, pollen, grease and microorganisms that circulate inside a home.

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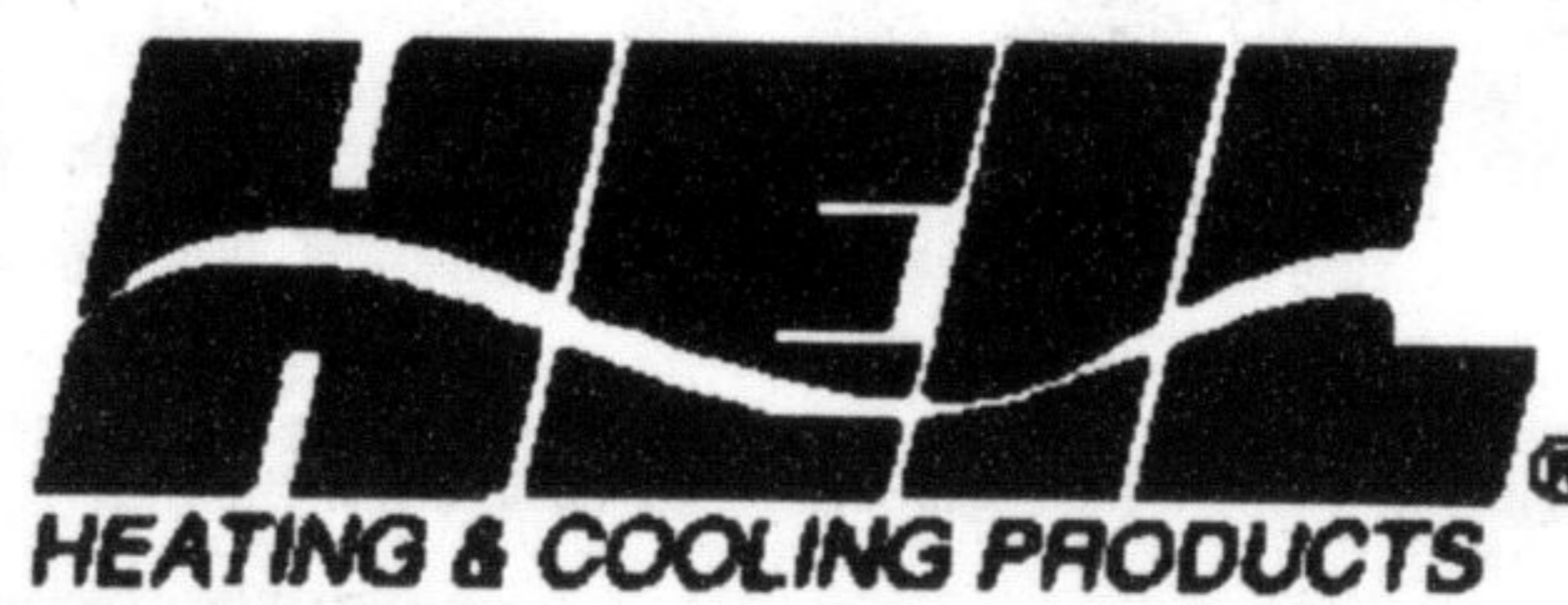
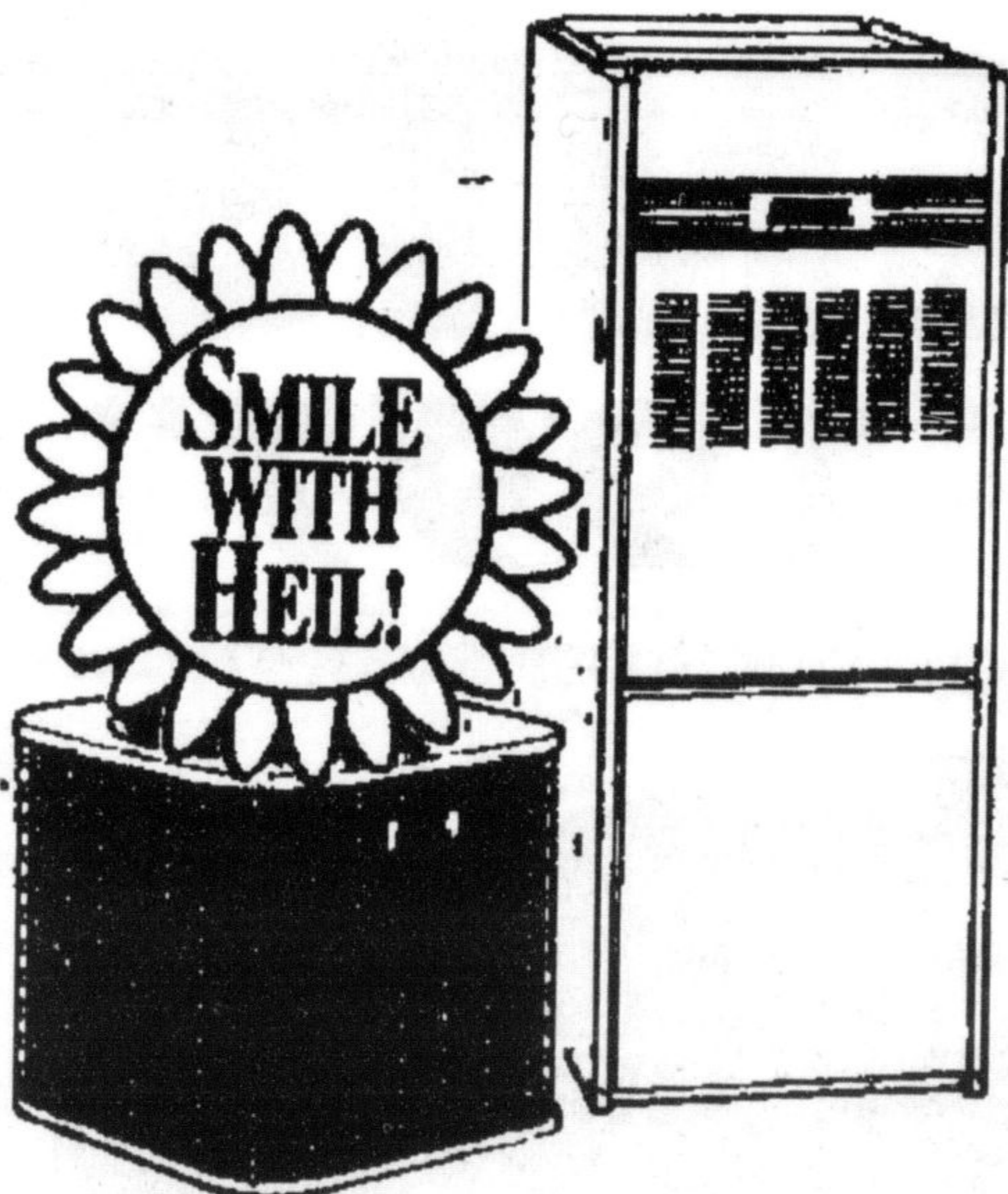
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