

A photograph of an HVAC technician in a blue uniform working on a unit. The technician is wearing a cap and is focused on the task. The unit has several gauges and wires. The image is overlaid with a grid of semi-transparent blue and white squares. The text 'WORKING WITH HVAC CONTRACTORS' is written in white, bold, uppercase letters across the center of the image.

# WORKING WITH HVAC CONTRACTORS

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Heat • Air • Experts who care

When dealing with an issue regarding your HVAC needs, you don't want to struggle finding good, qualified help. You should know right off the bat that you are getting help from a contractor that is knowledgeable in the industry and skilled to handle whatever task is put before them. You might wonder who you can trust, what should they be doing for me, and is it worth the cost to call in a professional? All of these questions can easily be answered and lead to sound results for anything you need.

### When Should You Contact a Professional?

Many homeowners attempt to fix their HVAC system on their own without having the knowledge to handle bigger problems. If you are having issues with your furnace, air conditioning system, or heat pump, there are noticeable signs to look for that may indicate a bigger problem than you can handle.

- **Furnace**
  - If your furnace is old, past 15 years, then it may need replaced.
  - If it is making strange noises.
  - If the yellow pilot light is on, CALL SOMEONE IMMEDIATELY! There could be a major problem and carbon monoxide could be leaking into the home.
  - Cold air is coming out.
- **Air Conditioning System**
  - If your air conditioning system is 10 years or older, it may be in need of replacement.
  - If your system uses R22 Freon.
  - Continued breakdowns can indicate bigger problems that a contractor is well-equipped to handle.
- **Heat Pump**
  - If either unit, indoor or outdoor, aren't performing properly,
  - Temperatures aren't staying even throughout the house

### Locating a Certified Contractor

Once you have figured out what your problem is and know what to look for in a contractor, you need to know how to find a certified contractor in your area. At HVAC.com, we have a Certified Contractor Directory that can be searched for qualified contractors in your area. We have tested and vetted all the contractors on our directory to provide you with a certified contractor that is committed to providing excellence, knowledge, and can guarantee their workmanship.

If you want to find a contractor on your own then by following the guidelines below, you will find a qualified contractor that you can trust.

## Knowing Who to Trust

First things first, you need to find a contractor you can depend on and trust! There are a few tips to ensuring you get quality workmanship from a contractor.

### **Make sure the contractor is qualified!**

You can ask a contractor about his licensing and insurance information before ever getting started. Every state is different with their licensing procedures, so make sure you understand the licensing requirements in your area and ask for a copy of the contractor's license. The insurance is to protect both you and the contractor so finding that information out works for both parties involved.

You also want to know if the contractor is NATE certified. NATE stands for North American Technician Excellence and they only certify contractors who have underwent strenuous testing and have shown their skills to be at the top of their field. NATE technicians will have the industry's gold standard certification showing their excellence in the industry.

### **The price of the contractor is important!**

Price is a huge aspect of finding a qualified contractor but knowing that they will guarantee their work shows their faith in their own work. Trusted contractors will try their hardest to minimize costs for you whenever possible.

An estimate from a qualified contractor won't be given over the phone but instead the problem will be discussed over the phone. The estimate will come after the contractor has inspected the issue first hand and can provide a more accurate cost of the work.

A good contractor will also have a contingency built into the estimate in case there are unforeseen problems that might arise with the initial work.

### **Size is important!**

If you are looking into replacing a system, the contractor should always include a size assessment for your home. Also, you can ask if they are using advanced technology to get the size, such as a blower door test, refrigerant charging scales, or hygrometers. The size of your new system needs to be just right to ensure that you don't increase your utility bills.

## What Does a Contractor Do?

Once you have decided on a certified contractor, the next step is to know exactly what they should be doing while you are paying them. HVAC contractors perform all of these tasks when working for a customer:

### Installation

- For every installation, there are sets of blueprints or requirements that instruct them on the proper method for installing a new system. Equipment should always be installed to the manufacturer's specifications, utilizing industry best practices.
- Connecting systems to different fuel and water lines.
- Connecting air ducts and other mechanisms.
- Installing electrical controls and wiring.
- Performing tests on the electrical controls.

### Repairs

- Inspect and asses any type of HVAC system.
- Test individual parts within the system to diagnose what needs fixing.
- Replace or repair whatever is broken or defective.

### Maintenance

- Performing routine maintenance to ensure the HVAC system is running efficiently throughout the year.
- Replacement of filters and lines to maintain the efficiency of your system.

Your contractor may use many different tools to perform a specific task on a job. You may see them use every day tools, like screwdrivers, pipe cutters, and wrenches. For more complex systems and their components, contractors may use more high-end tools that are essential to the system's needs. These more sophisticated tools might be carbon monoxide testers, acetylene torches, or even combustion analyzers. There also may be tools that help them recover and remove chemicals or fluids that are regulated by the government.