

Tips for Preparing Your Indoor Air Conditioning System for Spring

by **Scott Lanzer** | Feb. 23, 2015

 Cost Savings  Maintenance

It is generally a good idea to consider doing some basic maintenance on your air conditioning and heating unit at the beginning of every heating and cooling season. It has been especially cold this winter and that means a tough time for air conditioning equipment. These ultra-low negative temperature spikes, along with the extended times below freezing, can affect your home air conditioning system's Spring start up. But with a few checks and a little effort, you can help to ensure a trouble free summer cooling season.

Indoor System Startup Checklist:

1. Change the air filters: The change in seasons is usually a good time to replace your indoor air filters. The cold temperatures this winter has probably caused your furnace to run a lot more than previous winters. It's likely that your indoor air filter will have gathered a lot more debris and dust than normal, so be sure to change the filter before the 2015 cooling season.
2. Check the coil drainage hose: This hose (usually plastic) can also be called the "condensate line". Since the coil's temperature is lower than the ambient air, water will condense on the coil and drip into the tray below. This condensate needs to flow to a drain or the tray will fill up and flood the unit or potentially spill water into your basement. With the amount of time spent indoors this past winter due to the chilling temperatures affecting most of North America, it is possible that any impromptu soccer games or dodgeball matches in the basement might have moved this line. Check to make sure the line is in the proper place, attached, and will drain to the appropriate location.
3. Clean the supply vents and return grills: Make sure that both the supply and return air grills and vents are open and free of debris. It would also be good to use the vacuum to remove any pet hair or dust that might have accumulated during the previous season. Some houses have separate winter and summer supply grills, or house zoning and some even have separate systems – one for heating and one for cooling. If you have a system like this you might have put extra plastic material over the AC vents to prevent drafts during the cold Polar Vortex months. If so, it is important to remove these before you turn on the AC or you will not have proper air flow back through the system and this could cause severe damage. In general, cleaning all grills at the beginning of every season is a good idea.
4. Turn it on and make sure it works: After going through the checklist, wait for a nice, hot day when you have some time to check the air coming out of the indoor vents for the first few minutes after starting it, and then every few hours throughout the day. After the first few minutes, you should feel cool air coming out of the registers. If no air is coming out, or if the air coming out does not feel cool, then something is wrong and you should immediately turn the system off at the thermostat. You can go through the check list one more time and then try it again. If the problem persists, turn the system off and call a good HVAC contractor who can diagnose the problem. Leaving the system turned on when it's not running properly can do a lot of damage. It never hurts to ask a HVAC Professional to help diagnose the problems if your system is not working properly.