

Tips for Preparing Your Outdoor Air Conditioning Unit for Spring

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 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 outdoor 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.

Outdoor Unit Startup Checklist:

1. Inspect the outdoor unit panels: These panels are designed to enclose the electrical connections and must be in place to help protect both you and the system. If you are missing a panel (possibly due to wind) or if the panel is misaligned, this could cause potential risks for both you and the operation of the equipment. If the panel covering the electrical connections is missing or out of place you should call a qualified technician for an assessment before starting your system.
2. Remove any condenser covers, coil blankets or lids: If you covered the outdoor coil in order to protect it during the winter months, be sure to remove the cover before starting the system. These covers protect and insulate the coil, but also limit any heat transfer. Starting the system with any of these covers in place, even for a short time, could severely damage your system. Many people forget to remove their covers every year, often resulting in major repairs or even replacement of the whole system.
3. Repair or replace any damaged pipe insulation: The suction line (the larger copper pipe on the outdoor unit) helps to supply cool refrigerant back to the compressor in the outdoor unit. If the system's suction pipe has damaged insulation, this could cause a loss of required cooling for the outdoor unit which could damage your system and may also cause you to lose energy as well. Damage to the foam insulation can be caused by sun rot, freezing water trapped in the foam or winter animals looking for shelter or food. The insulation should be intact to maintain system cooling. If the insulation needs replacing, do so before starting the unit. Look on the copper pipe for a size (5/8, 3/4, 7/8, etc.) to determine the coordinate size of insulation. It might be possible to find the insulation at a local hardware store. NOTE: ONLY the larger line needs insulation. Do **NOT** insulate the smaller copper line.
4. Remove any debris from the outdoor coil: Depending on where you live or what side of the house your system is located on, you might find trash or vegetation blown into or against the coil. The system coils are designed to transfer heat, and any debris limits this effect. To get the best possible performance from your system, remove this debris from the coil and surrounding area. Also, while mulching in the spring, take care to not pack mulch around the base of the unit. This is especially true for heat pumps as there's likely a space under the unit and this should always be kept open to allow good air flow to the outdoor unit.