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A simple guide to effective HVAC management to make your home comfortable

Remember that it is your responsibility to ensure your home keeps functioning optimally. Unfortunately, HVAC isn't the prettiest maintenance task to deal with.

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There are a few things that make your home comfortable. It is beyond the interior decor, furniture, or even your media and entertainment gadgets. These things are important, but without the right temperature, the desired amount of humidity, and clean breathable indoor air, your home can be an unbearable space to live in. This is where your HVAC system comes into the picture. HVAC stands for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, comprising all the appliances in the building that can provide cooling, heating and ventilation when required.

But it is one thing to have your HVAC system and yet another to ensure it is working optimally. Most people realise a sharp drop in performance over a period of time and can't tell what the problem is. Built-up faults can also lead to severe damage if unchecked, and this is why maintenance is important. Maintenance is a key factor in influencing the performance and lifespan of your HVAC system, and doing it the right way can be the difference between enjoying your air conditioner or heater for many years, or replacing them only after five years or less.

Managing your indoor temperature and humidity in India, for instance, requires a holistic process beginning with construction. For buildings with preinstalled HVAC systems, developers have a role to ensure that the units and its components are accessible for maintenance routines. Also, many forward-thinking developers offer property and facility management services which include HVAC management, and this can make things easy for homeowners. If you're worried about staying above the elements in India, and keeping your HVAC in perfect shape, there are steps you need to take.

HVAC maintenance tips

- Regularly check the visible areas of your air conditioner, heater and exhaust fan for dust, particles, debris, and even animal waste. Clean properly using a brush or a piece of cloth.
- Be sure to install high-efficiency filters to trap debris and particles, so they don't clog the appliance and cause damages. If you already have a filter in your HVAC appliance, replace it with a high-efficiency model.
- Maintain a two foot clearance between your HVAC system and any other item or furniture to allow proper air intake.

- Engage in quarterly or biannual maintenance routines such as cleaning/replacing the filter every 3 months.
- Yearly HVAC maintenance routines include lubricating your HVAC motor, replacing defective fan belt, cleaning the condensation drain line of the AC, checking the carbon monoxide detectors all around your home and replacing their batteries, as well as ensuring every outdoor HVAC unit is free of debris and in good condition.

While some of these tasks can be a personal DIY, you should be careful not to compromise the integrity of HVAC system and put your home at risk. It is always best to invite the HVAC professional occasionally for routine check and maintenance or when you notice an abnormality. Besides, there are some issues that you won't be able to handle yourself for the first time, even with a YouTube tutorial right in front of you. An HVAC professional is a necessity if you have a central HVAC system that requires working on ductworks and ventilation systems.

Common problems to watch out for

There are some common HVAC problems that homeowners have to deal with. HVAC maintenance becomes inevitable to avoid them, otherwise these may lead to serious damage.

- **Abnormal Noise.** This is perhaps the most obvious way to tell that something is wrong with your HVAC system. It is also one of the first signs you'll observe. You need to call your expert HVAC technician to have a look when your AC begins to produce an abnormal sound.

- **Dirt and Dust.** This is one of the most common issues, and depending on which areas are affected, you may be able to clean the unit yourself. However, if you find your AC unit releasing dust through the vents, you may need to call the HVAC expert for proper cleaning. The filters and electric panels are components to watch out for.
- **Leaks.** Drain and connector lines have the potential to develop leaks. Just like corrosion, they can make your system work harder and cause serious damage if not checked. Refrigerant lines, condensate lines, and heat exchangers need to be checked monthly for leaks.
- **Corrosion.** Wires and terminals often tend to be affected by corrosion whenever moisture is allowed to settle on them. This can cause your system to lose power and turn off on its own or run harder than usual, leading to damage over time. Cleaning is a must for that reason.

Remember that it is your responsibility to ensure your home keeps functioning optimally. Unfortunately, HVAC isn't the prettiest maintenance task to deal with. If you're up for a DIY, some of these tasks can be handled yourself. But you can also save yourself the stress and call in the professionals.

(By Ajay Kumar Singh, President and CEO, Enviro)