Triple Check Homeowner Guide Series — Guide #2

Before You Buy a New HVAC System

10 things to check before you sign a heating and cooling quote

A new system is one of the biggest checks most homeowners write. Use this checklist with every contractor you talk to — including us.

■ *1. Get a Manual J load calculation*

Ask for a room-by-room heat loss/gain calculation. "Three tons out, three tons in" is a guess, not a design. Oversized systems short-cycle and leave the house humid.

■ *2. Have the ductwork inspected*

A new unit on leaky, undersized ducts performs like an old unit. Ask for static pressure readings and a duct inspection before you buy.

■ *3. Match the indoor coil and outdoor unit*

Mismatched equipment loses efficiency and can void warranties. Ask for the AHRI matched-system certificate number.

■ *4. Replace the line set or prove it is reusable*

Old line sets can carry contamination and may be the wrong size for new refrigerants. Ask whether it will be replaced or flushed and pressure tested.

■ *5. Know which refrigerant you are buying*

R-410A is being phased down. Newer A2L systems (R-454B, R-32) have different parts and service needs. Ask what your system uses and why.

■ *6. Compare SEER2 and HSPF2, not just price*

Higher efficiency pays back faster in some homes than others. Ask for an estimated operating-cost comparison for your house.

■ *7. Consider a heat pump or dual-fuel setup*

In Northeast Kansas, a heat pump with gas backup can cut heating cost. Ask for pricing on both before deciding.

■ *8. Plan for filtration and humidity*

A 4-5 inch media filter cabinet, and humidifier or dehumidifier where needed, protect the equipment and your comfort.

■ *9. Read the warranty fine print*

Know the parts vs. labor coverage, the registration deadline, and who performs warranty work.

■ *10. Require start-up and commissioning numbers*

Ask for superheat/subcooling, static pressure, temperature split and gas pressure readings on paper when the job is done.

Want a second set of eyes? Send us your quote and we will tell you honestly what looks right and what is missing. Call (913) 426-2588 or visit triplecheckconstruction.com/contact.

Next guide in the series: 10 Things to Check Before Hiring an HVAC Contractor. Subscribers get it first.