



Vol X999, Issue 10  
October 2008

## Furnace Preventive Maintenance Plans

With winter just around the corner, it's time to think about your furnace. Most homeowners know that an annual cleaning of your furnace will prolong the life, improve efficiency and reduce emergency repairs. An emergency furnace daytime service repair call starts at \$50 + before the service technician even arrives at your door. Additional charges for parts and labor can amount to another \$100 to \$300. An annual furnace preventative plan could save you money in the long run.

### What to Look for

Furnace preventative maintenance plans are designed to cover the costs for most parts and labor repair charges for your furnace. A legitimate plan will be underwritten by an insurance company. Avoid plans that are held primarily by the service company unless, the plan is offered by an equipment manufacturer in which case the service company should be an authorized dealer.

A basic plan should include a thorough furnace cleaning and safety check to ensure that the equipment is operational before the plan can take effect. Avoid plans that don't require a cleaning because in some cases, the plan doesn't take effect until 60 days after the contract is signed. A good plan should cover normal operating failures of the mechanical, electrical and electronic components of your furnace and frequently replaced parts. These parts can include a thermocouple, sensor, gas valve, and ventor motor to name a few.

Most plans don't cover heat exchangers, thermostats, filters, ductwork repairs, nuisance calls and problems resulting from misuse, neglected or repairs made by an unauthorized source.

### Choosing a Contractor

Before signing on the dotted line, assess the company offering the plan. Choose a contractor who's been in business for at least five years and ask for customer referrals. Most established contractors are manufacturer dealers for a name brand furnace line and belong to a state, province or national trade association. Clarify that the contractor supports your furnace brand and stocks replacement parts. Ask who's underwriting the plan and who's responsible if the insurance company or the contractor ceases operation.

### Read the Fine Print

- Investigate the following points of a plan:
- What's covered and not covered?
- Is there a limitation on the age of the furnace?
- Are there extra charges for after-hour, weekend or holiday calls?
- Is the plan transferable from one house to another or to a new homeowner if the property is sold?
- What's the procedure for submitting a claim? Is the invoice submitted directly to the insurance company or is the consumer required to pay upfront?
- Will the on-call service technician have documentation on hand to clarify that you've purchased a preventative plan in case you can't locate your copy?
- Are there any hidden costs not covered by the plan?
- Is the plan automatically renewed on the anniversary date?

Remember, always read the fine print!

### Furnace Preventative Maintenance Plans Rates

Annual inclusive plans that cover all service calls and parts and labor for one year can range between \$100 to \$150. A limited plan entitles the consumer to a preset percentage reduction of the repair cost or there is a small deductible. These plans are slightly cheaper, but you will still be paying something towards each repair. Most companies offer a discounted rate if you purchased a plan that covers the furnace and central air conditioning system. Both units will have to be cleaned. If the weather is too cold however, the air conditioning unit may not be cleaned immediately.

An inclusive annual furnace preventative maintenance plan selling for \$135 costs just 37 cents per day. Not a bad investment for the peace of mind you'll have knowing you're covered if your furnace decides to breakdown on a cold winter's day.

Source: The Dollar Strecher