

YOUR HOME



TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

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SPRING INTO ACTION

For so many homeowners, spring is the time to plant gardens, pack away the woolens and generally breathe in some fresh, warmer air. It's also a time to catch up on all of the little maintenance work around the house that might be, well, not as enjoyable. Nevertheless, keeping your house in top shape — both inside and out — is important when keeping your investment healthy.

One of the most simple — not to mention efficient — ways to prepare your house for a long, hot summer is with a HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) check-up. In fact, experts recommend a check-up every spring and fall to maximize your system's performance. Preventative maintenance will save you money on emergency repair costs, lower your bills, and keep you comfortable year-round.

Instead of waiting for a potential problem with your system, prepare for the summer months with these simple, HVAC tips:

- Change your filter regularly. A dirty air filter can reduce airflow, which is critical for your system to operate properly. Check it monthly and change it as needed.
- Clean the indoor and outdoor coils. Dirty coils also can restrict airflow.
- Keep debris and plants away from the outside unit. Objects blocking it can force heat to re-circulate and cause the unit to work harder than necessary.
- Check the Freon level. Have the proper technician determine if your system has the right amount of Freon.



A 'BEHIND THE SCENES' LOOK

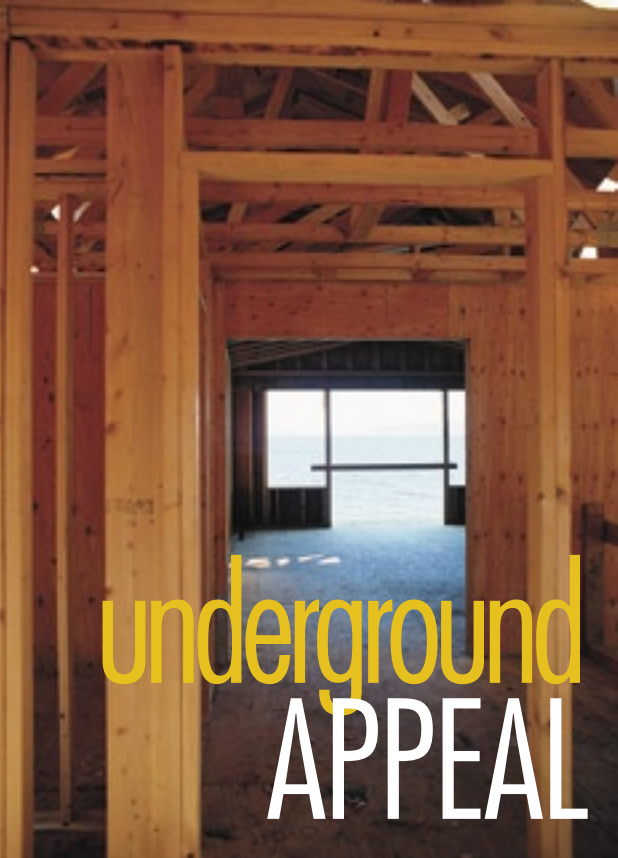
Tired of guessing where that warm air is leaking into your house in the summer and out of your house in the winter? You may not have X-ray eyesight but, with the use of residential infrared technology, homeowners can now get a sneak peek of what's going on behind their walls.

Gaps in windows, doors or attic spaces can lead to serious hikes in your monthly heating or cooling bill. Likewise, moisture build-up in the walls and hidden roof leaks can often lead to mold or mildew damage, which if not detected early is a serious issue for many home buyers.

With thermal imaging cameras, however, trained technicians can pinpoint hidden spaces that are the culprits of serious heat or cooling loss and possible condensation build-up.

The test can even determine if your insulation is still working or even missing in places. Instead of ripping out and replacing all of the insulation or roof, infrared imaging identifies the problem to find the specific area that needs repair.

Thermographic images must be taken by a certified technician though. To find one in your area, visit www.natresnet.org/directory/rater_directory.asp.



underground APPEAL

Potential buyers have many must-haves on their lists. From a modern kitchen to multiple bathrooms, appealing to homebuyers can be an arduous task, indeed.

Still, one popular feature is the addition of extra living space. The last thing buyers want is to feel cramped in their new home. Solution? Instead of expanding with an expensive addition, maximize the space you already have by finishing your basement.

Basements have many possibilities for

anything from playrooms to home theaters. Because most basements are isolated from the rest of the house, it can act as a sound buffer for children's play areas or create a space to play a musical instrument. Basements also have easy access to water lines and heating and cooling ducts, which makes it easier to add a bathroom or wet bar.

While these sub-rooms may be the easiest way to cost efficiently expand your home's living space, keep in mind the housing regulations specific to your area. Meeting these codes may not be as difficult as it sounds. Besides, refurbishing your basement could not only grab your potential buyer's interest, it might add to your asking price as well.

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