

Real Estate Matters!

The Cool Details About Central Air Conditioning

by Susan Reische

Accompanied by a Trane XR 17 SEER two-stage condenser, Michael Carlo - holding samples of flexible tubing and a ceiling trim kit - and Matthew Carlo discuss air conditioning solutions with Susan Reische.



We've finally made it to February, and although it's been a relatively mild winter, it seems like those hazy, hot and humid dog days of summer will never return...but they will! And so will the need for air conditioning.

It may seem strange to think about air conditioning at this time of year, but if you are curious about air conditioning solutions for your home, right now is actually a great time to plan this project. Research, vendor evaluation, permits, planning and site preparation can take a few weeks, not to mention that it may take some time to get on the installer's calendar. Right now could also be the perfect time to upgrade your existing system and be ready for the cooling season.

I have found that "central air" is a popular request, and many times a requirement, of prospective home buyers in Pelham. Not only does central air help you stay cool and comfortable on hot summer days, it also helps to preserve a home's furnishings and structural elements from humidity, and provides relief to allergy sufferers. So, the investment of time and money into this home upgrade now may allow you to live more comfortably and at the same time add to the future value of your home.

Air conditioning technology has rapidly advanced over the past few years, making it easier to install into the existing structures of Pelham's 19th and 20th century homes. There are several different types of central air solutions. The two more popular ones in town are "High Velocity" and "Ductless Mini-Split" systems. A High Velocity system is comprised of

an outdoor condenser, an indoor air handler, and a series of flexible, insulated tubes that deliver the cool air throughout the home. Ductless Mini-Split systems have just the outdoor condenser and indoor air handler.

I recently spoke with Michael Carlo, owner of Innovative Air Solutions, to learn more about these two air conditioning solutions.

Q. Can you explain the major differences between High Velocity and Ductless Mini-Split systems?

There are quite a few differences, but the most significant can be narrowed down to just four. First, much like a conventional air conditioning system, the High Velocity system requires ductwork to move the air throughout the desired space. Although 40% smaller than conventional ductwork, the High Velocity system uses a combination of small rigid and flexible ducts throughout the attic and basement (or unfinished areas) to deliver the conditioned air. The Ductless Mini-Split system, by contrast, does not require ductwork and is usually installed within the living space. This ductwork, or lack of, leads to the second major difference and that is the installation process. The High Velocity system requires years of experience and craftsmanship to install, along with at least one week per system to be custom fit to your home. A Ductless Mini-Split can usually be installed in a day per system and for the most part, is quick and easy to complete. Appearance is the third major difference. Whereas the High Velocity system is installed

with the intention of being seamless within the cosmetics of the home, a Ductless Mini-Split system is more noticeable since it is hung on the wall of the room it is conditioning. Customers that choose a ductless system are usually interested in the fourth major difference and that is spot heating or cooling, either to address an area that is not covered by a current system in the house, or one that requires a supplemental source to help get that area more comfortable. Ease of installation, along with price, will usually make a ductless system the best choice when looking to condition a much smaller area of the home.

Q. How many "zones" are possible?

There is definitely an advantage with Ductless Mini-Split systems when zoning is desired. Ductless systems are designed to allow for multiple comfort zones, or spot heating and cooling, which allows for different desired temperatures in almost any room of the house. Since High Velocity systems rely on major equipment and ductwork, zoning is usually limited per floor, and not as easily separated from room to room.

Q. What kind of demolition should a homeowner expect to see, and can you remain in your home during installation?

That depends on the design and finish of the home. A High Velocity system is more invasive than a ductless system regardless, but if the home includes an unfinished attic and/or basement, then the installation process

will have a very low impact and will require little to no demolition. A majority of our custom installations don't even require a follow up for painting or patching when we are complete. With over 2,000 systems installed, we have never had a situation where the homeowners had to leave during the process. This is even less of a concern with a ductless system because they are specifically designed not to require major changes to the home, and are usually quick and easy to install.

Q. How should a homeowner evaluate their current system to determine if an upgrade is needed?

There are many factors that should be considered. Ask yourself: Am I comfortable, with even temperatures throughout my home? How much is it costing me to be comfortable? How old is my current system? A central air conditioning system is expected to last about 12-15 years here in our area, however, there are many systems throughout Westchester that are much older than that. These older systems cost more to operate, more to repair, and more to maintain, not to mention the health and safety risks they put on the families using them because of all the dust, dirt and mildew we usually find on the inside. Many people wait too long to replace a system, and then they are faced with having to make a rushed decision because it is 95 degrees outside. I would suggest being proactive, getting a free evaluation and estimate, and then making that decision prior to a major failure. Chances are that the old inefficient system in your attic is costing you more to operate and own than a new one would anyway. A new, properly installed system should bring improved comfort, lower utility bills, a 10-year warranty, and most of all, some peace of mind.

Michael Carlo co-owns Innovative Air Solutions with his brother, Matthew Carlo. With over 22 years of experience as a heating and cooling company, the Carlo brothers provide heating and cooling services for homeowners throughout New York. Their team is trained and certified in the repairs and replacement of all types of HVAC equipment in both residential and commercial settings. Innovative Air Solutions can be reached at 914-793-7700.

Susan Reische, a Pelham homeowner and renovator who enjoys the experience of hazy, hot and humid summer days in central air-conditioning, is a Real Estate Salesperson for McClellan Sotheby's International Realty. Prior to joining Sotheby's, Susan was a marketing executive for the CNN Networks, and previously worked in advertising and publishing. You can reach her at 914-441-1516.