

# HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

## Time to Get SEERious About Air Conditioner Efficiency

by Dean Johnson

(NAPSA)—Buying a new central air-conditioning system for a home is a big investment. But when it comes to air conditioning, most of us aren't very serious about being knowledgeable energy consumers.



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A recent national survey by Emerson Climate Technologies, a leading provider of energy-efficient technologies for the air-conditioning industry, found that only one

of 10 American homeowners know the "SEER rating" for their central air-conditioning system.

The SEER rating—which stands for Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio—is the cooling output of a central air conditioner or heat pump divided by its power consumption. It's similar to the miles-per-gallon rating for automobiles. The higher the SEER rating, the more energy efficient the air conditioner operates—and the more you will save on your electric bill.

Central air conditioners made in the U.S. since 1992 are required by law to have an efficiency rating of at least 10 SEER. But that's about to change. Beginning in January 2006, the U.S. Department of Energy is requiring that all new central air conditioners made meet at least a 13 SEER standard.

Odds are you have not heard about this new standard. In fact, the Emerson homeowner survey found that 90 percent of homeowners are unaware of this new regulation.

The new SEER regulation doesn't affect your current air conditioner, but it will affect your next purchase of a central air-conditioning system. You will make a smarter purchase and enjoy your indoor comfort more if you take the time to learn what to look for and ask when buying a new air conditioner. Here are four tips:

**Get SEERious.** Find out the SEER rating and age of your home's current central air conditioner by checking the equipment labeling and your warranty records or contacting the contractor who installed it. If your air conditioner is a 10 SEER system and more than 10 years old, you can save on your electric bills by upgrading to a 13 SEER system. When shopping for a new air conditioner, ask the contractor for the highest SEER-rated system in your budget range.

**Look for scroll inside.** The compressor is the most important technology inside an air conditioner. It's the "engine" that pumps refrigerant through the air-conditioning system. Most high-efficiency air conditioners use scroll compressor technology. Scroll compressors operate more efficiently, reliably and quieter

than reciprocating (piston-type) compressors. For the best in energy efficiency and indoor comfort, consider air conditioners that use the new two-stage Copeland Scroll UltraTech™ compressors made by Emerson.

**When size does matter.** Even if you buy the most efficient air conditioner on the market, it needs to be sized correctly to your house. An experienced contractor will make a good recommendation by inspecting your home for air leakage, insulation levels, general climate and layout of the home. An over-sized air conditioner will cycle on and off more frequently, reducing its efficiency and making indoor temperature fluctuate more.

**Make routine maintenance a priority.** Like regular tune-ups for your car, it pays to have a professional contractor inspect and service your air-conditioning and furnace system annually to make sure it is operating at peak performance. Look for firms whose employees are certified by the North American Technician Excellence (NATE) training program.

*Dean Johnson is host of Home-time, the do-it-yourself home-improvement television series that's aired on public television stations across the country. For more information about the 13 SEER issue and Emerson's climate technology solutions, visit [www.GetSEERious.com](http://www.GetSEERious.com).*