



# Home Improvement Tips

## Key Questions To Ask Your HVAC Contractor

(NAPSA)—In many cases, getting your heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) system to operate at its peak starts with asking your contractor the right questions. The right questions may also help you save money.

For example:

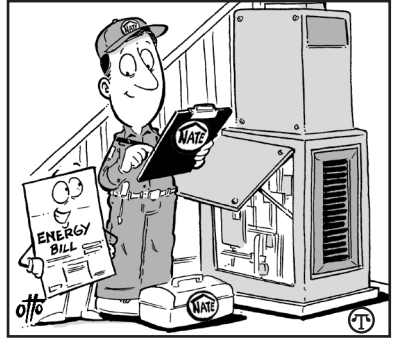
- How can I make my system operate more efficiently?
- What other, more efficient systems are available?
- How can I lower my monthly heating and cooling bills?
- Is there any basic routine maintenance I can do to help the system's functionality?
- What benefits would I get from an ENERGY STAR system?

Some say the key question is whether or not the contractor uses certified technicians for the job. For example, North American Technician Excellence (NATE)-certified technicians are skilled professionals who have proven their knowledge in the HVACR industry by passing specialized certification tests.

Plus, they will not only be knowledgeable about high-efficiency systems but will be able to help lower homeowner utility bills by ensuring proper installation and maintenance.

In selecting a contractor, you should also ask about the range of services the contractor provides (scheduled maintenance, repairs, 24-hour service). Ask for a preliminary inspection prior to having the contractor make any recommendations and always ask for and check references.

In addition to the energy savings resulting from an efficient



**In addition to increased comfort, a high-efficiency HVAC system may also be able to help a homeowner cut utility costs.**

system, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act now provides homeowners with additional expanded tax incentives on energy-efficient HVAC systems. A NATE-certified technician should be able to tell you if your system qualifies for the incentives.

To help, a Web site called HVACRAAdvice.com provides a number of useful documents and information pages, including:

- An Energy Savings Calculator
- A Heating/Cooling Checklist
- Maintenance Tips
- Information on how to make your home more energy efficient
- Details on carbon monoxide safety and detection
- Definitions of efficiency ratings (AFUE, SEER and HSPF).

The site also features a contractor locator where homeowners can type in their ZIP code to find companies that employ NATE-certified technicians.

To learn more, visit the Web site at HVACRAAdvice.com.