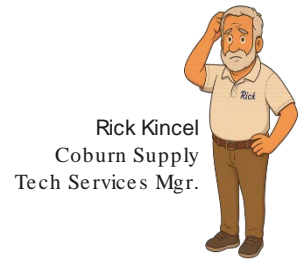




Thinking About Replacing Your AC? Here's What You Should Know About Your Ductwork



If you're like many homeowners, you might be facing the need to replace your air conditioner soon. There's something important to also think about...your ductwork.

In my experience, a lot of AC problems are directly caused by poor duct systems. While air conditioners have gotten much more efficient, duct systems haven't always kept up.

Ducts: The Unseen Problem

- **Leaky Ducts:** New building codes say that ducts should be sealed tightly. But many duct systems that are 10 to 20 years old were never sealed. If your ductwork is in the attic (like many are), that means a lot of the cool air you're paying for is leaking into your attic. In fact, tests show that leaky ductwork in attics can lose 25% to 40% of the air! That's like throwing away a big chunk of your money.
- **Old Insulation:** You'll probably hear that you should consider making changes to your ductwork when you get a new AC system. And you really should! Older ductwork was insulated with a value of "R4," but after 10-20 years in a hot attic, it's probably not doing much anymore. Current codes require better insulation (R8 minimum). That is double what you should have originally installed. So, you could be putting a brand-new, expensive AC on a duct system that leaks a lot of air and doesn't keep the cool air from getting warm before it reaches your home.
- **Duct Size and Airflow:** Here's another HUGE issue: new AC units are designed to be very precise, and they don't work well with undersized or blocked ducts. It's like trying to breathe through a Covid mask – it makes your whole body work harder. Older, less efficient AC units were more forgiving of poor ductwork. If your ducts aren't right, you won't get the energy savings you're paying for with your new system, and your AC might break down much more often. The warranty on your new AC might not even cover the labor costs to fix problems caused by bad ductwork. Duct sizing is much more important now, and the person who installed your old ducts would not have considered the needs of a high-efficiency units being installed today.

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What to Do?

Think about the cost of a new AC unit. The salesperson might be hesitant to add the cost of new ductwork because they're afraid of losing the sale to another, less knowledgeable company, who says you don't need it. But here's something to think about: AC companies in the South are often less busy in the winter. Technicians would also rather work in an attic when it's cool. You might be able to get a better price on ductwork if you have it done in the winter. Then you can replace your AC system later. Many companies offer financing to help with these costs.

Replacing your AC or ductwork isn't easy, but planning ahead with a trusted contractor is much better than dealing with these problems in the middle of summer.

Key Takeaway: Your ductwork is probably in much worse shape than you think, and putting a new AC on old, bad ductwork is a waste of money. Make a plan with your HVAC contractor before it becomes an emergency.