

# Consumer Awareness Guide

**Avoid The HVAC Installation Rip Offs!**

**Discover How to Choose a "Competent"  
HVAC Contractor To Install a  
New Furnace or Air Conditioning System**

## **Inside You'll Learn...**

- The Harsh Reality of the Residential HVAC Industry and How You Can Protect Yourself
- Why The Brand of Equipment You Choose Matters.
- How to Choose the Right Brand
- Why Brand is NOT the Most Important Factor When Installing A New Furnace or Air Conditioner
- Just Because You Get a Safety Inspection Done... It Doesn't Mean the Install Was Done Properly!
- 8 Questions to Ask an HVAC Contractor BEFORE You Invite Him Into Your Home For a Consultation

## Are you in the market to have a new furnace or air conditioner installed?

### With all of the HVAC companies out there, How do you choose which company is right for you?



Hi! I'm Blake Livingston and thanks very much for taking the time to read this Consumer Guide. I'm grateful for the opportunity to provide you with information to help you choose a heating and air conditioning installation contractor that's right for you.

I'm an Alberta Certified Journeyman Sheet Metal Mechanic and owner of Aire Serv Heating and Air Conditioning. I have 17 years of experience in the HVAC industry and in that time, I've learned that many consumers have been misled or ripped off or they just have many unanswered questions about furnace and air conditioner installation that I decided to offer this guide to help educate consumers before they buy.

In just a moment, I'll share with you some insights and misconceptions about furnace and air conditioning installations plus I'll give you 8 questions you should ask a contractor before you invite him into your home.

The purpose of this guide is to help educate you so you can make an informed decision when hiring an HVAC contractor to install your new furnace or air conditioning system.

By reading this guide you'll have the information you need to literally "interview" any HVAC company before you invite them to your home for an installation quote.

I'll also share with you a few inside secrets on how to choose the right brand of furnace or air conditioner.

OK Let's Get Started...

### **I apologize in advance if some of this sounds a bit harsh**

But what I'm about to reveal to you here is the truth and you need to know what's REALLY going on in the residential heating and air conditioning industry so you can protect yourself.

Along with equipment installations, we also do service work and we're constantly repairing furnaces and air conditioners that were not installed properly right from day one.

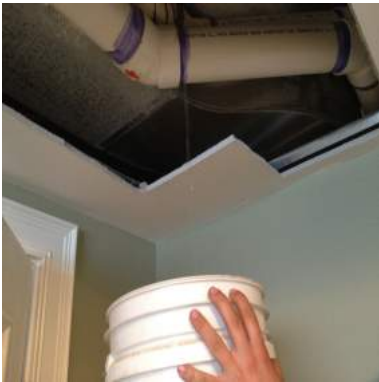
Sadly, every week or two we get called out to a new customer's home for a repair and have to inform the homeowner that their equipment is not working properly or sometimes not at all - because it was not installed properly. And the repair bills can be hundreds of dollars.

We've even replaced heat exchangers in furnaces that are as little as 3 years old because the installation was not done properly.

## Here's just a fraction of what we've seen...

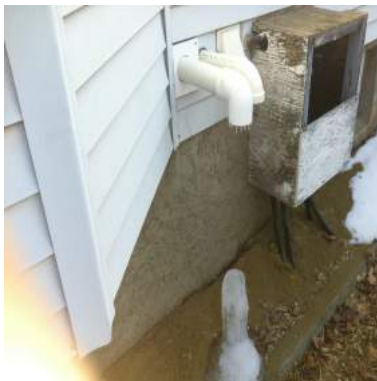


Gas lines in the way of furnace access doors so that the furnace door cannot be removed for service.



Replaced high efficient furnace vent piping and sometimes cutting out drywall ceilings (like we did here) to get at the piping because it's the wrong size and causing problems with furnace operation OR because it's full of water (like this picture) because of improper installation, OR it's joints are leaking water, OR even worse leaking carbon monoxide into the home.

Replaced furnace vent terminations... Here are 3 pictures of some bad installs. Can you imagine calling your contractor when it's -35C, your furnace isn't working because the vent termination outside is all frozen and your contractor says to just go outside with a hair dryer and thaw it out? True story!



TIP: There should be very little (if any) ice on a vent termination. And it should be sealed to the house properly



A Proper (Carrier brand) Vent Termination

We've:

- Replaced or repaired furnace drain piping because it's not done right causing problems.
- Reinstalling the whole furnace because nothing was done right.
- We've Pulled permits for jobs that were installed by someone else, fixed the install so it'll pass inspection so the house can be sold!



How about this furnace?

Neither the supply duct nor the return duct is actually connected to the furnace.

Can you imagine having an air conditioner installed, and for **15 years** it didn't cool the house down on a hot day? (When else would you use it right?) Over **15 years** tech after tech comes out to check the system to see what's wrong. Everything is good they all say!

I was referred to this customer, and I go out and find that the system is overcharged with refrigerant, meaning that there is too much refrigerant in the system. The system had twice the amount needed and could not operate properly. It's impossible.

The "only way" it could get that way was from a bad installation. I reclaimed the proper amount of refrigerant and it now works perfectly. (75% of a/c systems are not charged properly when installed.)

We've seen air conditioners installed too close to the house and even worse too close to inside corners of the house so that when you need to service the equipment you can't.

We've seen air conditioners mounted on brackets outside the home and the air conditioners are not even fastened to the brackets!



We've seen air conditioning evaporator coils installed with NO ACCESS DOOR! We've had to literally cut our way into furnace plenum ducts to access evaporator coils and have to custom make an access door after the service call. These pictures show a proper access door.

### **I could go on and on... But I won't.**

I've heard many people say that they would never get a high efficient furnace because their friend or whoever has had nothing but problems with their new furnace.

I'm here to tell you that if a furnace or air conditioner is installed and maintained properly, your chances of having problems are slim. Yes parts fail now and again but in general much less frequently if the install was done properly.

In the old days there was not much to installing a new furnace. Yes it needed to be done properly but there was not much that you could do wrong as long as it met the safety code.

But now with high efficient furnaces having water inside them and inside the venting, and air conditioners with the new refrigerant and running at higher pressures, a proper install is CRITICAL.

### **Furnaces and air conditioners are applied products**

Meaning the furnace or air conditioner comes in a box. And along with the furnace or air conditioner are many other pieces and someone with adequate skill has to install it all and make it work properly and last for years to come.

Think about this, what if you were buying a new car. And what if cars didn't get built at the factory; they got built at your local dealership? I'm pretty sure you'd want to check the reputation of that dealership to make sure they are building all their cars properly right?

This is no different.

### **You can purchase the best furnace or air conditioner in the world...**

But if it's not installed properly you no longer have the best system in the world, you have a potential headache. Which too many homeowners have found out the hard way.

### **Here's something else to consider (and maybe worry about)...**

If a furnace or air conditioner is not installed properly, chances are you won't know it right away. You probably won't find out until you start having problems and it could be years later.

And tell me, what contractor is going to correct a problem 3 years after install date for free?

You know when you look online and search for reviews on heating and cooling equipment, and you find bad reviews on a particular brand or model let's say.

Yes it could be a bad unit but more than likely, it's a bad installation.

### **So At This Point, You Might Be Wondering...**

#### **Why are so many installations done badly?**

Well I blame the owner or manager of a company for a bad install.

It's my opinion that it's the owner or manager's responsibility to make sure the technicians are doing their job properly. You shouldn't have to baby-sit an adult HVAC installer but it's good practice to at least check on them once in a while.

Unfortunately too many owners are more worried about getting to the next job and making more money than making sure the job is done right and taking proper care of their customers.

Some owners are the installers too. I know many of them. I'm one too. One guy came into the parts store one day bragging that he installed 3 A/C systems in one day and the same guy a few months later was proud that he installed a new furnace in 3 hours. (I feel bad for those customers of his)

#### **Most companies pay their installers a percentage of the job**

I'm not a fan of percentage pay because when installers are paid by the job, they naturally want to get the job done as fast as possible. The faster they get it done the more money they make per hour. This is where corners get cut.

And add to that, more and more companies are not hiring journeyman technicians to do the job because they cost too much.

I know a journeyman installer who was told that in the next year the company he works for will no longer employ journeyman installers. Incredible, he'll be let go because he knows what he's doing.

You know... It's really frustrating to me. Because if you chase all of the journeyman out of residential HVAC who do have left? Just a bunch of guys out there who are learning to install a system at your house.

It all boils down to Lack of pride, incompetence, and a complete disregard for a customer's right to have a job done properly.

**I don't tell you all this to scare you. I tell you this because it's REAL**

And you need to know what's going on in this industry so you can try to protect yourself from the crooks.

I'm not saying that all contractors and techs are like that, but there are a ton of them out there you really do need to be careful.

Not always but "typically" you'll run into problems when you hire a company... Based solely on low price.

I'll talk more about that in a few minutes.

Now I'd just like to say that we here at Aire Serv have completely stayed away from all of that nonsense.

You know we just go out, do the job right and treat people the way they should be treated.

We educate our customers and try to help them make an informed decision before they purchase any new equipment from us.

And then we actually do the installation properly to manufacturer's guidelines and to current safety codes.

We have journeyman installers with years of experience to get the job done right.

Why Journeyman?

Call me crazy but, it makes sense to me that if you're really happy with your new equipment installation and our service, maybe you'll hire us again if needed?

And maybe you'll even tell your friends and family about us?

Our technicians are paid by the hour so if it takes extra time to get the job done properly, the technicians don't mind and your price stays the same.

All that matters is... "Is the job done right..."

Isn't that the way it should be?

In fact, we get many calls back from happy customers to let us know that the installation passed the safety inspection and that the city inspector was really impressed with our work.

Think about how good you'd feel if you heard from the city safety inspector that he was really impressed with the install!

I bet you'd think that's AWESOME! And it is.

But see, here's the thing...

**The inspector shouldn't be impressed with our work!**

We are just doing the work the way it should be done. With care and pride. It's not difficult.

It should be normal but it seems that it isn't.

So if the inspectors are impressed with our work, what does that tell you about many installs that the inspectors see everyday?

It tells me that many installs are not done well.

I've had many conversations with safety inspectors over the years and they all say the same thing. It's un-believable what they see everyday.

If you get the chance, ask any inspector about what they see everyday. It'll amaze you.

### **The BIG Misconception About Safety Inspectors**

The inspector's job is to check to see if the install was done according to the safety code. But that doesn't mean the equipment was installed according to the manufacturer's instructions.

You see the inspectors don't have time to read every installation book for every piece of equipment that they inspect and confirm that it was done properly.

For example, they are not going to hook up a set of gauges and a pipe thermometer on a new air conditioning system and check the sub-cooling to see if the refrigerant level is correct.

And they're not going to confirm that the manifold pressure on a new gas furnace is set properly.

They are going to check to see if the electrical connections, gas connections and vent clearances and other stuff to make sure it's done safely. That's it!

That's their job. To make sure it's safe for you. Whether or not it works properly is not really their concern. It's not their responsibility it's the contractor's.

So unfortunately for consumers... Just because an installation meets the safety codes, it does not mean it was installed properly.

### **What Brand of Equipment Should I Buy?**

I get questions about brand all the time. Usually the questions are...

What's the best brand? Or what's the most reliable brand?...

Here's my opinion about brand...

When it comes to brand, brand matters but probably not how you think it does. You should choose a brand that is "popular" and here's why.

When you choose a brand that's "popular", there are two HUGE benefits to you.

1<sup>st</sup> there will be more dealers of that brand.



2<sup>nd</sup> there will be more parts available for that brand.

So think about it, if there are many dealers of that brand it'll be easier to get service when you need it and if there is a lot of that brand of equipment out in the marketplace, the distributor of that brand will stock more parts for the dealers enabling you to get a repair done much quicker if you ever do need parts.

The Bottom Line is - There's less risk for you... If you choose a popular brand.

And just to contrast that, what if you choose a brand where there are just a few dealers and not much of that equipment out in the marketplace?

You could be faced with a serious problem if it's -30C and your furnace goes down because you need service and possibly parts as soon as possible!

A couple of years ago I was called out to a furnace that wasn't working and it happened to be furnace with a brand name that I had never heard of before and I was the third guy in to look at it. It needed parts and there was none to be found. We had to replace the furnace.

And check this out...

We live in Edmonton, where it can easily get down to -35C. Right?

If you can believe it... there are a few "unpopular" brands being sold here in Edmonton right now where the distributor is NOT AVAILABLE evenings and weekends to supply parts to the service companies.

Do you want to take that chance? Even if the unpopular brand is cheaper?

So choose a popular brand.

Here in Edmonton the 3 most popular brands are Carrier, Trane and Lennox.

### **So how do you choose from those 3 brands?**

I mean is Carrier any better than Lennox or is Lennox any better than Trane and so on...  
Honestly? I'd say the 3 brands are fairly equal in quality and reliability

### **Here's the key...**

Assuming that you're "main concern" is getting the installation done properly,

### **You don't choose the brand**

You choose the company that you feel most comfortable with who will install one of those brands and you feel that you can trust them to do a proper installation.

Does that make sense? Again like I said before, the installation is what matters most.

The installation matters more than the brand.

If you are looking to install a specific brand, then only interview contractors that sell that brand. But I'd stick to the "popular" brands.

Also just so you know, All big brands have "lesser known" equipment brands. For instance Carrier also manufactures a brand called Payne. There are less models to choose from but 2 of the furnaces are the exact same furnaces as the Carrier's without the cost of a big name brand. Typically you might be able to save \$200-\$300 on a furnace or air conditioner.

So to Re-cap...

You should choose the company that you feel comfortable with, and you think will do a great job of installing a reliable and "popular" brand.

If you do this, you'll greatly increase the odds of getting a "headache free" installation and a system that will last for years. AND chances are you'll need less repairs over the life of your equipment.

For the record, we're a Carrier dealer and we stock the most common repair parts in our service vans and we're able to get parts any day of the week, day or night if needed.

### **Let's talk about price for a moment**

In your search for the right company to do your install, you'll find a wide range of prices for similar systems. You'll find BLOW OUT PRICES, OFF SEASON PRICES, CLEARANCE PRICES, Spring Specials, Fall savings and well I'm sure you've seen all the ads and coupons.

As with price, you'll also find a wide range of competency of both installers as we already discussed, and sales people.

Many times I've seen the wrong size equipment installed, usually it's a furnace that's too big for the home. But I've seen air conditioning systems that are too small. I've seen air conditioning systems that were added on and sized properly for the home but the original furnace was too small to support the air-flow needed to operate the air conditioning system properly and causing problems.

In these cases the sales person sold the wrong equipment.

So not only do you have to hope for good installers, you have to hope you're being sold the right equipment and price can vary a lot just by different sizes and types of equipment.

Again, not all sales people are incompetent but it's out there...

So yes you'll find a wide range of pricing for similar systems

### **When it comes to pricing I have 2 points for you to consider**

**Point #1:** The price you see offered may not be for the equipment you want installed. Before you select an installation company, decide what equipment and accessories you want installed. Then get prices on comparable equipment that is sized properly for your home.

Price is what you pay. Value is what you get. Price is usually an indication of quality.

More efficient equipment cost more. Better-trained people cost more. Reliable service and products cost more.

You probably don't buy the cheapest cars, clothes, or foods. So don't let the price be the only deciding factor when choosing a contractor.

**Point #2:** The price you see advertised may not be the price you pay.

Many homeowners have learned that the low price they saw advertised or were quoted was not the amount they were charged.

And if you've ever hired a contractor, you too may have been the victim of false or misleading advertising. You may have learned the hard way that some companies offer a cheap price - and then pressure you into paying a lot more once they get inside your home. Some of them may even break the law by using illegal bait and switch tactics.

As in all businesses and professions, the Heating and Air Conditioning industry has its share of bad apples.

I take no pleasure in telling you this, but some are unethical - and, sadly, a few are dishonest. By their misleading advertising and false promises, they cast a dark shadow on our entire industry.

As you might expect we are not the cheapest contractor in Edmonton. Although... We have been told that **"For what we do, we're the cheapest in town"**

We've been told over and over that we give good value.

We have many [testimonials](#) on our website and we have a testimonial book filled with pages and pages of testimonials and comments from happy customers who were glad they chose us and would happily refer us. And they do. In fact most of our install work comes from referral. If you want references we have many.

Truthfully our goal is to make the whole furnace or air conditioning buying experience as painless as possible for our customers, and to properly install safe and reliable systems that will keep our customers comfortable for years to come.

You have many HVAC companies to choose from which can make it very difficult to choose a company.

To help you make your choice I'd like to give you 8 questions I recommend you ask any company before you invite them into your home.

- 1- Is your company licensed, insured and bonded and can you prove it?
- 2- Is at least one of the install technicians a journeyman and can you prove it?
- 3- Do your installers get paid by the hour, or by the job?
- 4- What training have your sales people and your installers had in the last year?
- 5- Is the price you give me a firm price, or will the price change?
- 6- If I purchase a system from you, are you trained to service the equipment?
- 7- Do you do background checks and drug testing on your employees?
- 8- Do you have references?

Once you're satisfied that you're working with an honest and competent professional, invite him into your home for an in-home consultation.

By asking those questions, you'll gain the information you need to make an informed decision.

### **Congratulations!**

You've reached the end of the guide... and I hope you've found the information educational and helpful in your quest to find an HVAC contractor that's right for you.

If you have any further questions I welcome your calls. Again my name is Blake Livingston and our phone number is 780-905-9594. I'm not always available right away but leave a message and I'll return your call.

So while you've been reading, you've had the opportunity to learn a little about how we operate and what we stand for...

AND I'm thinking you must be in the market for a new furnace or air conditioner or you probably wouldn't be reading this.

If you ARE in the market for a new furnace or air conditioning installation, and appreciate high quality workmanship more than lowest price, and you think we might be a good fit for you, I'd love the opportunity to work with you on your residential HVAC project.

I promise to work with you to design a comfort system that's right for you and do a great job on the installation. AND its risk free to get started once you decide on a system. We don't require a deposit, we'll show up on time with all the materials, do the install properly, show you how the system works and make sure you're happy. Once you're happy with the install, then we ask for payment. What could be more fair?

If you're interested, the next step would be to schedule an in-home consultation. We can be reached at 780-905-9594.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Blake Livingston