



A GUIDE FOR THE SACRAMENTO HOMEOWNER

5 Things

*5 Things Every Sacramento Homeowner Should Know
Before Their HVAC System Breaks*

Simple checks that help protect your comfort,
your air quality, and your wallet.

From a Sacramento HVAC company serving local homeowners since 1959.

DEAL MECHANICAL, INC.

SACRAMENTO, CA | SERVING SINCE 1959 | CSLB #445102 | (916)927-4500

WHY THIS GUIDE EXISTS

Written to be useful before it's needed.

Most homeowners don't think about their HVAC system until the house gets uncomfortable, the bill jumps, or the unit stops working during a Sacramento heat wave.

By then, decisions feel rushed. This guide helps you understand the basics before you're under pressure.

Inside, you'll find five practical things to check — each one simple enough that a homeowner can understand it, serious enough that ignoring it can shorten your system's life or raise your power bill.

We've been doing HVAC work in Sacramento since 1959. These are the five things we wish every homeowner knew, before the system breaks.

Let's go.

— *Deal Mechanical, Inc.*

Deal Mechanical, Inc. · Sacramento, CA



THING 1 OF 5

Your filter protects more than your air.

In Sacramento, the right filter depends on the season, your home, and your system.

The filter is the cheapest, simplest part of your HVAC system – and one of the most overlooked. It has two jobs: keep dust and particles out of the air your family breathes, and keep the inside of your equipment from getting clogged with debris.

The “higher MERV is better” trap: Many homeowners assume the highest MERV rating is always best. Not always true. A high-MERV filter your system wasn’t designed for can restrict airflow, make the blower work harder, and reduce cooling output. The right filter is the highest MERV rating your system can handle without losing airflow.

SACRAMENTO REALITY

During wildfire smoke season – typically August through October in Sacramento – check your filter every 30 days. Smoke particles are finer than household dust and load filters much faster.

WHAT YOU CAN DO – THING 1

What to do about it.

1. Find the filter slot. Return-air grille or near the air handler. Size is on the air handler door.
2. Check MERV and direction. Arrow points toward the equipment. MERV should match the season.
3. Match MERV to season:
 - Spring/Fall: MERV 8
 - Summer: MERV 11
 - Wildfire smoke: MERV 13
4. Change on a calendar. 60 days normal. 45 with pets or heavy smoke. Write the date on the new filter.

FIELD NOTE

"We see more airflow problems from the wrong filter than from any single equipment issue. A MERV 13 in a system designed for MERV 8 can drop airflow by 15% or more – that's a significant restriction."

DO THIS TODAY

Buy two or three filters at once. Set a phone reminder for the first of every month. During wildfire season, check every 30 days.

SMART HOMEOWNER NOTE

Before buying a filter upgrade, make sure it matches what your system can handle. Good recommendations are based on airflow, MERV rating, and system design.

A filter that matches your system and your season is the cheapest health upgrade in your house.

Not sure what filter works? Call and ask. **(916) 927-4500**



THING 2 OF 5

Some of your cooled air may be escaping before it reaches the room.

Leaky or poorly insulated ducts are common in older Sacramento homes.

If some rooms feel warm even when the AC has been running for hours, the problem may not be the unit outside. It may be what's happening between the equipment and the room: the ductwork.

Sacramento attics in July and August routinely run 130–150°F. Your supply ducts carry cooled air at roughly 55°F through that environment. In homes built before 2005 with original ductwork that's never been sealed, small gaps at every joint add up. Air that should be cooling your bedroom is cooling your attic.

SACRAMENTO REALITY

Homes built in the 1960s through 1990s often have ductwork that meets the code of its era but doesn't perform well in today's heat. New equipment on old leaky ducts never performs to its rated efficiency.

What to do about it.

1. How old is your ductwork? Pre-2005 and never sealed = strong candidate for evaluation.
2. Notice the signs: System runs constantly on hot days, back rooms feel warmer, PG&E; bill higher than expected.
3. Ask for a duct-leakage test. Calibrated diagnostic. Above 15% leakage is worth sealing.
4. Sealing pays back in 2-4 years on cooling cost alone – and the system runs cooler, lasts longer.

FIELD NOTE

"The AC unit may have been replaced once or twice, but the original ducts are still there – aging, leaking, and wasting capacity."

DO THIS TODAY

On a hot afternoon, check the farthest rooms first. Weak airflow, warmer rooms, or whistling near registers can point to duct issues.

SMART HOMEOWNER NOTE

A good duct evaluation starts with measurement: leakage testing, airflow, or static pressure. Ask for numbers before approving major duct work.

Duct sealing is often the highest-impact HVAC investment a 20-year-old Sacramento home can make.

Ask about airflow and duct evaluation. **(916) 927-4500**



THING 3 OF 5

Uneven rooms do not automatically mean you need a new system.

“A hot bedroom is not a diagnosis.”

One of the most common reasons homeowners call: the upstairs bedroom bakes, the office over the garage is always five degrees off, or the back addition never feels right.

Most homeowners assume the system is undersized, or the house needs zoning, or a second system. In our field experience, many comfort complaints start with airflow – not failed equipment.

SACRAMENTO REALITY

Older Sacramento homes often have a single large return in the hallway and no dedicated return in bedrooms. With doors closed, the room becomes a pressure zone that won't cool properly.

What to do about it.

1. Walk the house on a hot afternoon. Note each room: warmer, cooler, or same as the thermostat?
2. Check the easy stuff. Registers open? Returns unblocked? Doors open? Filter clean?
3. Open every door for an afternoon and re-check. Imbalance gone? Fixable with transfer grilles.
4. Still uneven? It's the ductwork. Ask for a balancing visit with airflow measurement.

DO THIS TODAY

Hot Afternoon Room Walk: Pick a hot day. Open all doors. Check registers and filter. Compare airflow by hand. Note rooms that don't improve.

SMART HOMEOWNER NOTE

Before approving a major repair, make sure the technician has checked the basics: filter, registers, returns, dampers, and duct pressure. Real diagnosis includes measurements, not assumptions.

"A warm room on a 105° afternoon doesn't mean you need a new system. It means that room needs attention. Those are very different things."

Ask for airflow measurement before assuming replacement. **(916) 927-4500**



THING 4 OF 5

Big thermostat setbacks can backfire during Sacramento heat.

A smart schedule should reduce runtime without forcing a brutal late-afternoon recovery.

Conventional advice says to let the house warm up while you're away, then bring it back down. In a mild climate that works. In Sacramento on a 105°F afternoon, that strategy asks your AC to do its hardest work during the most expensive part of the day.

Setting 82°F away and 73°F at 5pm means the system removes nine degrees during PG&E's highest-rate window. The compressor runs hard, and savings from "not cooling all afternoon" disappear into the recovery.

SACRAMENTO REALITY

Sacramento's peak heat (4-7pm) overlaps PG&E's highest time-of-use rates. The closer your AC's hardest work is to that window, the more an aggressive setback costs you.

What to do about it.

1. Check your schedule. Dropping 8–10 degrees during work hours? That may be costing you.
2. Try this for two weeks:
 - 6–10am: 74–76°F (pre-cool)
 - 10am–4pm: 78°F
 - 4–7pm: gradual recovery
 - 7pm–6am: 74–75°F
3. Smart thermostat? Let it run on Eco or Adaptive. Don't override with aggressive manual schedules.
4. West-facing room hotter? That's a window/shade problem – not an HVAC problem.

DO THIS TODAY

Track your comfort and power bill over one billing cycle with gentler setbacks. Every home is different – insulation, ducts, sun exposure all change the math.

SMART HOMEOWNER NOTE

There's no single thermostat rule for every home – ducts, insulation, windows, shade all change the math. A good technician asks about your home before recommending a schedule, and a hot room at 5pm is often a window issue, not HVAC.

Gentler setbacks save you twice: smaller bill, less compressor cycling, longer equipment life.

Ask whether your schedule is helping or hurting comfort. **(916) 927-4500**



THING 5 OF 5

A real annual tune-up should be more than a quick look.

The goal is catching small problems before they become expensive repairs.

A real tune-up is one of the highest-leverage things a homeowner can do. The catch: “tune-up” means very different things at different companies.

Refrigerant charge, coil condition, electrical components, airflow, and drainage all affect performance and lifespan. A tune-up that only changes the filter and glances at the outdoor unit is doing a fraction of the actual work. A thorough tune-up takes a technician 45–75 minutes per system.

SACRAMENTO REALITY

Your system runs hardest during Sacramento’s cooling season. A spring tune-up catches issues before the system is pushed to its limit every afternoon.

WHAT YOU CAN DO – THING 5

What to do about it.

1. When was the last tune-up? Can't remember? Schedule one before the next season change.
2. Right time of year. Spring (Mar-May) for AC. Fall (Sep-Nov) for heating. Off-peak = priority + unrushed work.
3. Real tune-up = 45-75 minutes. Gauges, coil cleaning, electrical, performance test. A 15-minute "tune-up" is not a full maintenance visit.
4. Consider ProCare: \$19.50/month, two tune-ups included, priority scheduling, 10% off repairs, 1-year labor warranty.

FIELD NOTE

"ProCare is for the homeowner who would rather not think about scheduling twice a year. Either way – membership or one-visit-at-a-time – the important thing is the work gets done once a year."

DO THIS TODAY

Ask when booking: "How long does a full tune-up take?" If under 30 minutes, it's not a full tune-up. Schedule before peak season.

SMART HOMEOWNER NOTE

When comparing tune-up offers, ask what's included and how long the tech spends at the equipment. A true visit includes measurement, inspection, and cleaning – not just a filter change.

A thorough annual visit can help your system run cleaner, safer, and more reliably as it ages.

Ask about a tune-up or ProCare. **(916) 927-4500**

Sacramento HVAC Risk Scorecard

10 simple checks. 2 minutes. See where your system stands.

My filter hasn't been changed in over 60 days

I don't know what MERV rating my filter is

My home was built before 2005 and the ductwork is original

Some rooms are always hotter or colder than others

My AC runs almost constantly on summer afternoons

My thermostat drops 8+ degrees during the day (aggressive setback)

I can't remember the last time my system had a tune-up

My system is over 10 years old

I hear strange noises when the AC or heat runs

My power bill has climbed without a change in usage

Score

0-2 checked: Low risk. Your system is likely in decent shape. Keep doing what you're doing – and mark your calendar for a spring tune-up.

3-5 checked: Moderate risk. A few items worth addressing before peak season. Start with the easy ones and consider a professional evaluation for the rest.

6+ checked: Elevated risk. Your system may be working harder than it should, costing more than it needs to, or heading toward an expensive breakdown. A diagnostic visit is worth scheduling.

Call (916) 927-4500 and tell us your score – we'll help you prioritize what to do next.



HERE'S THE BOTTOM LINE

That's the five.

You now have a clear, simple way to think about your HVAC system: airflow first, ducts matter, uneven rooms deserve diagnosis before replacement, thermostat schedules should match Sacramento heat, real maintenance happens once a year.

Most of these checks are things you can start with yourself. That's intentional. We'd rather help you understand your system than pressure you into a service call you may not need.

And when you do need help — a tune-up, a repair, a diagnostic, a second opinion, or a replacement quote — Deal Mechanical is here. Phone answered by a real person. Certified technicians paid hourly, not commission. Serving Sacramento since 1959.

Serving Sacramento-area homeowners since 1959

Licensed California contractor: CSLB #445102

Certified technicians (not commission-based sales)

Flat-rate pricing — you know the cost before work begins

Written warranty on all work

Same-day service when available

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

(916) 927-4500

dealmechanical.com

Mon-Fri 7:30am-4:00pm | 2535 Front St, West Sacramento

P.S. – Comparing HVAC quotes? Ask us for our Honest Quote Checklist – seven simple questions you can ask any HVAC company you're considering. We'll send it over with no obligation.

— *Deal Mechanical, Inc.*

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