

# The Duct Man

HVAC Industry News You Can Use



## INDOOR AIR QUALITY: Clean Means Green

### Best Marketing Advice

How hand-written thank you notes can help you grow your business

HVAC contracting is a highly competitive business, and simply doing a good job is not enough to secure a customer's loyalty. With literally thousands of other contractors in NJ competing for the same business, what can you do to make a lasting impression and stand out from the crowd without spending a fortune? Hand-written note cards.



A personal note of appreciation is a simple, inexpensive, and very effective way to make customers remember you the next time your services are needed.

Very few contractors bother to send thank you notes, which is why they are become so indelible in a customer's mind. Good quality cards and envelopes printed with your company logo can be purchased at a small cost from any local printer or office supply chain store, and each takes only a minute or two to write:

*"Dear Mr. and Mrs. Jones, we sincerely thank you for your business. Please don't hesitate to call if you have any further questions or concerns, or if we can do anything else for you".* Mention their friendly Labrador retriever by name, or congratulate them on their new baby. Thank them again for the bottled water they offered. Take notice of what they take pride in - a tropical fish tank, a vegetable garden, a prize buck mounted on the wall - and offer a compliment. A simple "Go Yankees!" can go far with a die-hard fan. Let customers know they matter (and they do!), that they're not just a number, and chances are far better that they'll call you again or refer you to a friend or colleague when the need arises.

Did you know that indoor pollutant levels can be **two to five times higher than outdoor air**? Or that the EPA ranks indoor air pollutants among the **top five environmental risks to public health**? If not, you are not alone. In a study conducted



last year by 3M's Filtrete brand, a substantial percentage of Americans are unaware of the risks of indoor air pollutants and the importance of good indoor air quality (IAQ). The survey showed:

- 50% wrongly believe the air in their home is less polluted than outdoor air
- 94% know that changing air filters is important, but only 43% change them four or more times a year

- Allergy sufferers are far more likely to take medication for their symptoms (76%) than change their air filters more frequently (43%)
- 76% admitted to regular use of items like scented candles, improperly vented gas stoves, and fireplaces, all of which contribute to poor IAQ

### Informed customers are better customers

Many homeowners think of HVAC contractors only as a source for heating and cooling and are unaware of the role they can play in improving indoor air quality. In fact, it is the contractor's job to educate customers on IAQ, the importance of filtration, and available options like air cleaners, duct cleaning, duct sealing, ceiling insulation, dehumidifiers, and additional returns. Informed customers are far more likely to invest in IAQ, as shown in another recent study.

Thirty percent of homeowners rated IAQ to be equally important to energy efficiency, and those offered an IAQ solution were willing to spend more than \$600.



Of course, before educating customers on IAQ, HVAC contractors must first be fully conversant in terms like CFM, VOC, HEPA, and MERV and able to explain them clearly to customers. Learn to spot HVAC system and ductwork problems, and listen to customer concerns. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for correcting air quality issues so it is important for technicians to be fully educated on how to find the root source of an IAQ problem.



## DUCT LEAKAGE TESTING

Beginning in January 2013, the New Jersey Residential Energy Code (2009 IECC) came into full effect. One of the requirements under the code is that all new homes must undergo and pass a duct leakage test by a third party inspection company in order to receive a Certificate of Occupancy, and most local officials are now requiring stricter compliance.

### When is the best time to perform duct leakage testing?

Contractors have the option of choosing to have the test performed at either the rough, pre-drywall stage or at the completion stage. While duct leakage thresholds can be more difficult to achieve when testing is performed during the rough stage, **issues are much easier to correct than when they are discovered at the final stage of construction, after drywall has been installed and ductwork is largely inaccessible.**

### Best techniques

There are a number of ways to prepare for a duct leakage test that can help ensure a successful outcome. First, it is best to perform the test after the furnace has been installed. Testing done prior to furnace installation is more expensive and time-consuming, and a stricter leakage threshold (4 CFM/100 sq. ft. versus 6 CFM/100 sq. ft.) must be met. Ensure that furnace front panels are installed, and seams, gaps and holes in the furnace are properly sealed. Filter covers must be installed and made airtight. Registers and other ductwork terminations must be sealed airtight with tape or other means or the system will fail the test. All boots and covers must be sealed both above and below the subfloor. It is recommended that testing be performed before insulation is installed. Avoid panned joist returns, which are notoriously leaky and a poor practice in general. Duct leakage testing of systems with panned joist returns is not permitted during the rough stage and may only be performed at the final stage of construction, at which time leaks are likely to be found and repairs will be difficult to access.



## NO-WAIT CUSTOM FABRICATION

**Having to wait days, or even weeks, for custom ductwork can result in costly job delays and dissatisfied customers.**

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