Did you know that your Heating Air Conditioning and Ventilation (HVAC) system accounts for a significant portion of the energy use in your home. On average 56% of our utility bills goes for heating and cooling. Because of this, it is important that we examine our HVAC to ensure that we are getting maximum efficiency from our unit.

Regardless of the type of system you have, dirt and neglect are the #1 causes of heating and cooling system failure and a contributor to high-energy bills. You can keep your heating and cooling system at peak performance by performing routine maintenance on your unit. It is also important to have your unit inspected and maintained by a licensed HVAC technician. While it isn't necessary to have an HVAC service contract in order to have your unit maintained by a professional, it can be a cost effective way of maintaining your unit.

A service contract allows you to prevent any unforeseen problems and unwanted costs while keeping your heating and cooling system at maximum energy efficiency. A service contract should be performed twice a year. HVAC technicians become extremely busy during the summer and winter months, so it is best to schedule the maintenance of your system in the spring and in the fall. One way to remember to schedule an appointment is to call your HVAC technician when the time changes to and from day light savings time.

A general maintenance check-up should consist of a few things. Here are the things you can expect during a general service visit.

- During the inspection, the technician will tighten and inspect all electrical connections and measure voltage and current on motors. Faulty electrical connections can cause your unit to be unsafe and will reduce the lifetime of the unit.

- The technician will inspect the motor and belts for wear and tear
and lubricate if necessary. Parts that are not properly lubricated or are worn will cause your unit to use more electricity.

While performing maintenance on your system, the HVAC technician can observe flaws in your system and make recommendations to help your unit perform to its maximum efficiency. He/she may recommend that your ducts be sealed if leaks are found.

During a service call or performance of the maintenance contract, your HVAC technician may also recommend replacing your older unit with a more efficient one. Older units are less efficient and cost more to run than today's newer energy efficient units. Replacing an existing unit saves up to 50% on your heating and cooling bills. When looking for a new model, look for the ENERGY STAR label. This label identifies that the unit meets energy efficiency guidelines set by the US Environmental Protection Agency and US Department of Energy.

**Keeping the power bill low**

There are also ways that you can help lower your energy bill by simply changing family behaviors. Reducing your energy demands this winter is easy, and many times free:

- In the winter, set your thermostat to 68 degrees F, or your lowest comfortable setting. For each degree you raise your thermostat, you can reduce your energy costs by as much as 3-5 percent.

- Educate family members about energy conservation. Keep doors and windows closed while the heater is on.

- Clean or replace HVAC unit filters every month.

- Keep air registers clean and opened in all rooms.

- Keep furniture away from the registers and air returns of your home. Placing furniture on top or against them will cause loss of air circulation.

- Use kitchen and bathroom ventilation fans wisely. Use them for short periods to draw moisture and odor out of your home. Running them for extended periods can allow warm air to escape outside.

- Keep draperies and shades open during the day on windows that face the south side of the house. Close the draperies and shades at night to in order to retain the heat that has built up in the house.


Reducing your energy usage in the winter benefits you, the consumer, and the larger community. Keeping your winter bill under control means greater savings, and reducing your energy needs translates into cleaner air for everyone.

For more information on energy conservation tips for your home, contact Peggie Garner, Onslow Extension County Director, at the Onslow County Center with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension #910-455-5873. Or stop by Monday thru Friday 8:00 a.m. til 5:00 p.m. The office address is: 4024 Richlands Hwy, Jacksonville, NC 28540.
Of all the social skills, politeness may reap the greatest rewards in effort vs payoff. Learning and using manners is easy, and well-behaved children receive lots of positive recognition and praise from adults. Teaching manners involves four basic techniques: modeling, prompting, repetition and consistency.

**Manners Matter**

**Instruct in stages**

Begin with the fundamental “please” and “thank you” as soon as your children begin to talk. As soon as one task is mastered, move on to the more complex.

*Example: Telephone etiquette:*

  * Start with teaching them to say “hello” and “good-bye.”
  * When they are old enough, teach them to ask the caller to, “Please wait while I get my dad.”
  * Lastly, train older children to take messages.

**Try a variety of techniques**

* Instruct your child in how to put the napkin in his lap by doing it for him.
* Try giving one-word reminder cues, such as “napkin.”
* Attempt non-verbal cues by just pointing to the napkin.

**Be positive**

* Children react negatively to the word *don't*, but are challenged by the word do. Instead of saying, “Don't chew with your mouth open,” try “Do keep your lips together while chewing.”

**Be consistent**

* Set “household standards” and keep them consistent. *Example:*

  Family members must remove hats at the table or wash hands before being seated.

* Use polite reminders. “Wash your hands before being seated, please.”

* Escort disruptive children from the table graciously. “I can't allow you to eat with your hands, but you may return to the table when you're ready to use your folk.”

**Model the measure you insist on**

* Point out occasions when you're modeling appropriate behavior. “Carol sent me some roses when Grandpa died. It's polite for me to write this thank-you note.”

* Conversely, if you talk when your mouth is full of food, your children are likely to do the same.

**Voice your expectations**

* Plan ahead for upcoming events and discuss your expectations ahead of time. If you'll be dining at someone's house and they are serving food your child doesn't like, instruct him in how to respond. *Example: “I expect you to graciously pass the plate and say, No thank-you, I don't care for Brussels sprouts.”*

**Compliment your children**

* Praise children when they spontaneously use words that express consideration. *Example:*

  “I heard you thank Mrs. Ellis for taking you to the movie. That was thoughtful and polite.”

**Don't expect perfection**

* If your children are tired after a long day, lighten up on the manners. There is always tomorrow.
**Repetition is key**

* Only through repetition can children develop the habits and confidence to interact effectively with people. Provide opportunities for them to practice their skills. Let them answer the phone, order their own food at restaurants and write their own thank-you notes.

Raise the bar and you'll find children will rise to it; lower it and they'll achieve that standard too.

**Tips for Donating Used Clothing**

Donating old clothes to charity is a great idea for many reasons. It's a great way to de-clutter your closets and drawers. The environment also benefits since clothing thrown away rather than donated ends up in the landfill. Donating old clothes can be especially helpful to society as people who need affordable clothing often have access to donated clothes.

Make sure that the clothing you donate is wearable. Yes, there are people who really need affordable used clothes, but nobody should have to wear stained or ridiculously outdated items. Look for a place that recycles fabrics and/or use stained or dated old clothing for rags for household cleaning and dusting. Stained, but clean towels and blankets are often appreciated as donations by animal shelters.

Now is a good time to donate clothing; you can clear your closets and drawers of clothing that you won't be wearing any longer and make room for new clothes you may get as holiday gifts. But remember to try to donate your old clothes in season so the secondhand shops and other charities will be able to distribute or sell the clothes faster rather than having to store them for another season. Smaller organizations may not have a lot of storage space.

Give thought to where to donate certain clothing items. If you have some really special pieces of clothing to donate, such as a glamorous evening outfit or a collection of career, maternity or baby clothes, you can often find special programs in your area in need of these items. For example, some organizations have special projects such as offering good used prom dresses and suits to high school students, or professional business attire to job seekers.

**Do Well, Be Well with Diabetes**

Chances are, you or someone you love have been affected by diabetes in some way. But even if you haven't been affected by diabetes, you need to know that diabetes is the biggest public health crisis of the 21st century, and it continues to grow to epidemic proportions. Nearly 24 million children and adults in the United States have diabetes. The death rate for diabetes has continued to grow since 1987, while the death rates due to heart disease, stroke and cancer have declined. Having diabetes places a person at increased risk for a number of serious, even life-threatening, complications including:

- **Heart disease and stroke** – adults with diabetes have heart disease death rates about 2 to 4 times higher than adults without diabetes.

- **Blindness** – diabetic retinopathy causes 12,000 to 24,000 new cases of blindness each year making diabetes the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults 20-74 years of age.

- **Kidney disease** – diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure, accounting for 44% of new cases in 2005.
- Amputations – more than 60% of nontraumatic lower-limb amputations occur in people with diabetes.

Remembering the 'ABC of diabetes' can help to prevent or delay the onset of these serious diabetes complications:

- Average Glucose – most people with diabetes should get an estimated Average Glucose (eAG) or an A1C test every 6 months, which measure how well they are managing their diabetes over time. It is important to keep their eAG less than 154 mg/dl or A1C less than 7%.

- Blood Pressure – people with diabetes should have a target blood pressure of less than 130/80 mmHg.

- Cholesterol – LDL (bad) cholesterol should be below 100 mg/dl; HDL (healthy) cholesterol should be above 40 mg/dl for men and 50 mg/dl for women; triglycerides should be below 150 mg/dl.

- For more information about diabetes, please visit the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org or call 1-888-DIABETES (1-888-342-2382).

Beginning in January 2009, The North Carolina Cooperative Extension office will be offering Do Well, Be Well with diabetes, a series of monthly classes for individuals with diabetes, their family members, friends and anyone who is interested in learning more. Each class will include a short educational session and provide useful handouts. Some classes will include a food preparation demonstration and tasty samples. Classes will meet at 10 am the first Tuesday of each month at the Cooperative Extension Learning Center. Classes are free, but pre-registration is required. Call Robin Seitz at 910-4355-5873 or e-mail robin_seitz@ncsu.edu for more information.

### How To Cook Turkey

#### Thawing A Turkey

What is the best way to thaw a turkey? There are two ways to safely thaw a turkey, but refrigerator thawing is recommended. Defrost the turkey in its original wrapper on a tray in the refrigerator 24 hours for every 5 pounds. Never thaw a turkey at room temperature.

You may also place the wrapped turkey in the sink and cover it completely with cold water. This method requires about 30 minutes per pound. Change the water every 30 minutes to make sure it stays cold. If the wrapping is torn, place the turkey in another plastic bag, close securely and then place in water.

#### Thawing Times For a Turkey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turkey size (lbs.)</th>
<th>Refrigerator (Days)</th>
<th>Cold Water (hours)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>12-16</td>
<td>2-3</td>
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<td>16-18</td>
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<td>20-24</td>
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#### Preparation

After thawing, get the turkey ready for cooking by following these tips:

- Remove original plastic wrapper from thawed or fresh turkey.
• Remove the neck and giblets from the body and neck cavities.

• Thoroughly rinse turkey and inside cavity.

• Drain juices and blot turkey dry with paper towels.

• Return legs to tucked position, if untucked.

• If using an oven-safe meat thermometer, insert into the deepest part of the thigh. If using an instant-read thermometer, it will be inserted when it is time to check for doneness.)

• Brush with oil to prevent drying of the skin.

WASH HANDS, UTENSILS, SINK AND EVERYTHING ELSE THAT HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH RAW TURKEY.

Stuffing a Turkey: To stuff or not to stuff? This is an important question to ask because cooking a home-stuffed turkey can be somewhat riskier than cooking one not stuffed. If the stuffing is not cooked and handled properly, foodborne illness could occur. However, with careful preparation and the use of a meat thermometer to ensure that safe temperature are reached, consumers can safely enjoy the traditional stuffing, inside OR outside the bird. Follow these safe stuffing tips:

Prepare Stuffing Safely: Mix the stuffing just before it goes into the turkey. Use only cooked ingredients in stuffing such as sautéed vegetables, cooked meats and seafood (oysters), and pasteurized egg products instead of raw eggs. If more convenient, the wet and dry ingredients can be prepared separately ahead of time and chilled. Mix the ingredients just before placing the stuffing inside the turkey or in a casserole.

Stuff The Bird Properly: Stuff both neck and body cavities. The turkey should be stuffed loosely, about three-quarters cup of stuffing per pound of turkey. This will help allow the stuffing to reach the proper 165°F internal temperature whether the stuffing is in the bird or in a casserole. Use a meat thermometer to be sure of the temperature. The stuffing should be moist, not dry, since heat destroys bacteria more rapidly in a moist environment.

Cook At The Proper Temperature: The stuffed turkey should be placed immediately in a preheated oven set no lower than 325°F. Cooking overnight in a “slow” oven is not recommended for stuffed or unstuffed turkey since foodborne bacteria can form under these conditions.

Use A Meat Thermometer: Checking the stuffing temperature with a thermometer is essential. That is because even if the turkey itself has reached the proper internal temperature of 180°F in the innermost part of the thigh, the stuffing may not have reached the correct temperature of 165°F in its center. It is important to reach this temperature in all parts of the stuffing to be sure that foodborne bacteria are destroyed.

Prestuffed poultry: Buying retail-stuffed whole poultry is not recommended because of the highly perishable nature of a previously stuffed item. Some USDA-inspected frozen stuffed poultry MUST be cooked from the frozen state to ensure a safely cooked product.

For questions concerning this article, please call us at 910-455-5873.