

# **BETHESDA HOMEOWNER'S HEATING MAINTENANCE CALENDAR**

*Your Complete Guide to Year-Round Heating System Care*

Customized for Bethesda, MD Climate & Homes

Prepared by AMS Air Conditioning & Heating  
(240) 899-5777 | [ams-airconditioning.com](http://ams-airconditioning.com)

## **Welcome Bethesda Homeowner!**

This maintenance calendar is specifically designed for Bethesda's unique climate challenges. Our moderate Mid-Atlantic winters, combined with dramatic temperature swings and varying humidity levels, require a thoughtful approach to heating system maintenance.

**By following this calendar, you can:**

- Prevent unexpected breakdowns during cold snaps
- Reduce heating costs by maintaining peak efficiency
- Extend your system's lifespan significantly
- Ensure your family's safety and comfort
- Maintain warranty compliance

## Month-by-Month Maintenance Calendar

### JANUARY - Peak Heating Season

**Focus: Monitor system performance during coldest weather**

| Task                            | Notes  | Done |
|---------------------------------|--|------|
| Replace or clean filter         | <i>Monthly during heavy use</i>                    | ✓    |
| Check thermostat accuracy       | <i>Compare to separate thermometer</i>             | ✓    |
| Listen for unusual noises       | <i>Note any banging, whistling, or grinding</i>    | ✓    |
| Monitor heating bills           | <i>Compare to previous January</i>                 | ✓    |
| Clear snow from outdoor units   | <i>Heat pumps only - maintain 2-foot clearance</i> | ✓    |
| Check carbon monoxide detectors | <i>Test and replace batteries if needed</i>        | ✓    |

**Bethesda Tip:** January often brings our coldest temperatures. If your heat pump runs constantly or switches to auxiliary heat frequently, it may be undersized or need service.

### FEBRUARY - Late Winter Vigilance

**Focus: Prepare for temperature swings and potential snow**

| Task                   | Notes                                       | Done |
|------------------------|---|------|
| Replace filter         | <i>Essential after heavy January use</i>    | ✓    |
| Check condensate drain | <i>Ensure clear flow (heat pumps)</i>       | ✓    |
| Inspect outdoor unit   | <i>Remove debris, check for ice buildup</i> | ✓    |
| Test emergency heat    | <i>Verify backup heating works</i>          | ✓    |
| Review utility bills   | <i>Track efficiency trends</i>              | ✓    |

**Bethesda Tip:** February's freeze-thaw cycles can cause ice dams on heat pumps. Check your outdoor unit weekly during this month.

## MARCH - Transition Season

### Focus: End-of-season inspection and planning

| Task                              | Notes                                    | Done |
|-----------------------------------|--|------|
| Schedule professional maintenance | <i>Best time for thorough inspection</i> | ✓    |
| Document any issues               | <i>Note problems for technician</i>      | ✓    |
| Clean around indoor unit          | <i>Remove dust and obstructions</i>      | ✓    |
| Check ductwork                    | <i>Look for visible damage or gaps</i>   | ✓    |
| Plan summer projects              | <i>Consider upgrades or repairs</i>      | ✓    |

## APRIL through SEPTEMBER - Off-Season Maintenance

During Bethesda's cooling season, heating maintenance is minimal but important:

### April-May: Spring Shutdown

| Task                   | Notes   | Done |
|------------------------|---|------|
| Turn off humidifier    | <i>Prevent summer moisture issues</i>                 | ✓    |
| Cover outdoor units    | <i>Protect from debris (if not using for cooling)</i> | ✓    |
| Schedule major repairs | <i>Best time for system upgrades</i>                  | ✓    |

### June-August: Summer Dormancy

| Task                      | Notes  | Done |
|---------------------------|--|------|
| Monthly visual inspection | <i>Check for pest intrusion or damage</i>      | ✓    |
| Run system briefly        | <i>Monthly 10-minute test prevents seizing</i> | ✓    |
| Clear vegetation          | <i>Maintain clearance around outdoor units</i> | ✓    |

### September: Pre-Season Preparation

| Task                  | Notes  | Done |
|-----------------------|--|------|
| Remove unit covers    | <i>Prepare for heating season</i>                  | ✓    |
| Test heating mode     | <i>Verify proper operation before cold weather</i> | ✓    |
| Schedule fall tune-up | <i>Professional inspection before heavy use</i>    | ✓    |
| Stock filters         | <i>Buy season's supply</i>                         | ✓    |

## OCTOBER - Heating Season Prep

**Focus: Comprehensive preparation for winter**

| Task                           | Notes  | Done |
|--------------------------------|--|------|
| Professional tune-up           | <i>Complete annual maintenance</i>           | ✓    |
| Test thermostat programming    | <i>Update for heating season</i>             | ✓    |
| Inspect/clean vents            | <i>Ensure unobstructed airflow</i>           | ✓    |
| Check insulation               | <i>Seal gaps around windows/doors</i>        | ✓    |
| Test carbon monoxide detectors | <i>Replace batteries</i>                     | ✓    |
| Review emergency contacts      | <i>Have AMS number handy: (240) 899-5777</i> | ✓    |

## NOVEMBER - Early Heating Season

| Task                                | Notes  | Done |
|-------------------------------------|--|------|
| Replace filter                      | <i>Start season with clean filter</i>        | ✓    |
| Monitor first cold snap performance | <i>Note any issues</i>                       | ✓    |
| Check pilot light                   | <i>Gas furnaces only</i>                     | ✓    |
| Verify even heating                 | <i>Check all rooms for comfort</i>           | ✓    |
| Clear decorations from vents        | <i>Holiday decorations can block airflow</i> | ✓    |

## DECEMBER - Holiday Season Care

| Task                           | Notes   | Done |
|--------------------------------|---|------|
| Replace filter                 | <i>Extra important with holiday guests</i>      | ✓    |
| Adjust for increased occupancy | <i>More people = different heating needs</i>    | ✓    |
| Keep vents clear               | <i>Watch furniture placement for gatherings</i> | ✓    |
| Prepare for travel             | <i>Set appropriate away temperatures</i>        | ✓    |
| Schedule January service       | <i>Book now to avoid emergency rates</i>        | ✓    |

## System-Specific Maintenance Guides

### Gas Furnace Maintenance

*Common in: Wood Acres, Wyngate, Westmoreland Hills*

| Maintenance Task           | What to Look For                                  | Frequency |
|----------------------------|---|-----------|
| Visual flame inspection    | <i>Blue flame = good, Yellow = service needed</i> | Monthly   |
| Listen to startup sequence | <i>Should be smooth, no delayed ignition</i>      | Monthly   |
| Check exhaust vent         | <i>Ensure clear of obstructions</i>               | Monthly   |
| Clean flame sensor         | <i>Professional service recommended</i>           | Annually  |
| Inspect heat exchanger     | <i>Professional inspection for cracks</i>         | Annually  |

### Heat Pump Maintenance

*Common in: Downtown Bethesda, newer construction*

| Maintenance Task               | What to Look For                                   | Frequency        |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Check defrost cycle            | <i>Should activate when needed, not constantly</i> | Weekly in winter |
| Clean outdoor coils            | <i>Gentle spray with hose</i>                      | Spring & Fall    |
| Monitor refrigerant lines      | <i>Check insulation integrity</i>                  | Monthly          |
| Clear 2-foot radius            | <i>Remove leaves, snow, debris</i>                 | As needed        |
| Professional refrigerant check | <i>Ensure proper charge</i>                        | Annually         |

### Boiler System Maintenance

*Common in: Kenwood, Edgemoor, historic homes*

| Maintenance Task           | What to Look For                     | Frequency       |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Check water pressure       | <i>Typically 12-15 PSI when cold</i> | Monthly         |
| Bleed radiators            | <i>Release trapped air</i>           | Start of season |
| Inspect for leaks          | <i>Check valves and connections</i>  | Monthly         |
| Test pressure relief valve | <i>Ensure proper operation</i>       | Annually        |
| Water chemistry test       | <i>Prevent corrosion</i>             | Annually        |

## DIY vs. Professional Maintenance

### Safe DIY Tasks

|                                |                           |   |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Filter replacement             | Most important DIY task   | <i>Turn off system first</i>                      |
| Thermostat battery replacement | Prevents heating failures | <i>Note settings before changing</i>              |
| Clearing vents/registers       | Improves airflow          | <i>Never close more than 20% of vents</i>         |
| Basic cleaning                 | Around unit area          | <i>Never spray water on electrical components</i> |
| Visual inspections             | Look for obvious issues   | <i>Document with photos</i>                       |

### Professional-Only Tasks

|                           |                                |                                     |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Gas line work             | Serious safety hazard          | <i>Licensed technician required</i> |
| Refrigerant handling      | EPA certification required     | <i>Illegal for homeowners</i>       |
| Electrical repairs        | Fire/shock risk                | <i>Licensed electrician needed</i>  |
| Heat exchanger inspection | Requires disassembly           | <i>Special tools needed</i>         |
| Combustion analysis       | Requires specialized equipment | <i>Annual professional service</i>  |

## Emergency Troubleshooting Guide

### No Heat? Try These Steps First:

|          |                              |  |   |
|----------|------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Check thermostat</b>      | Ensure set to HEAT and temperature above room temp | <i>Replace batteries if display is blank</i>              |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Check circuit breaker</b> | Look for tripped breaker                           | <i>Reset once only - if trips again, call for service</i> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Check filter</b>          | Severely clogged filter can shut system down       | <i>Replace if dirty</i>                                   |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Check pilot light</b>     | Gas furnaces only                                  | <i>Follow manufacturer's relighting instructions</i>      |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Check outdoor unit</b>    | Heat pumps only                                    | <i>Clear ice/snow, ensure fan spins freely</i>            |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Check fuel supply</b>     | Oil/propane tanks                                  | <i>Verify adequate fuel level</i>                         |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Check vents</b>           | Ensure open and unblocked                          | <i>Furniture or drapes may block airflow</i>              |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Check safety switches</b> | Some systems have door switches                    | <i>Ensure all panels secure</i>                           |

**If these steps don't restore heat, call AMS immediately: (240) 899-5777**

## Bethesda-Specific Energy Saving Tips

### Maximize Efficiency in Our Climate

#### 1. Smart Thermostat Settings for Bethesda:

|                   |                |   |
|-------------------|----------------|---|
| Winter Day (Home) | <b>68°F</b>    | <i>Comfortable and efficient</i>            |
| Winter Night/Away | <b>62-65°F</b> | <i>Save 10% per degree lowered</i>          |
| Vacation (Winter) | <b>55°F</b>    | <i>Prevents freezing, maximizes savings</i> |

#### 2. Manage Bethesda's Humidity:

• Maintain 30-40% winter humidity (lower feels colder) • Use exhaust fans sparingly in winter • Consider a whole-house humidifier for comfort

#### 3. Zone Your Historic Home:

• Close off unused rooms in large homes • Use space heaters for occasional-use spaces • Install programmable thermostats for different areas

## Your Heating Maintenance Partners

At AMS Air Conditioning & Heating, we understand the unique challenges of maintaining heating systems in Bethesda homes. From historic Kenwood properties to modern Bethesda Row condominiums, we've serviced them all.

### Our Maintenance Plans Include:

|                            |                                   |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Annual Tune-Ups</b>     | Comprehensive 21-point inspection |
| <b>Priority Service</b>    | Jump to the front of the line     |
| <b>No Overtime Charges</b> | Same price 24/7/365               |
| <b>Repair Discounts</b>    | 15% off all repairs               |
| <b>Filter Delivery</b>     | We bring filters to you           |
| <b>System Monitoring</b>   | We track your system's health     |

## Schedule Your Maintenance Today!

**(240) 899-5777**

ams-airconditioning.com

*Serving Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Potomac, and surrounding areas*