

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

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:

1	Check thermostat	Ensure set to HEAT and temperature above room temp	<i>Replace batteries if display is blank</i>
2	Check circuit breaker	Look for tripped breaker	<i>Reset once only - if trips again, call for service</i>
3	Check filter	Severely clogged filter can shut system down	<i>Replace if dirty</i>
4	Check pilot light	Gas furnaces only	<i>Follow manufacturer's relighting instructions</i>
5	Check outdoor unit	Heat pumps only	<i>Clear ice/snow, ensure fan spins freely</i>
6	Check fuel supply	Oil/propane tanks	<i>Verify adequate fuel level</i>
7	Check vents	Ensure open and unblocked	<i>Furniture or drapes may block airflow</i>
8	Check safety switches	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)	68°F	<i>Comfortable and efficient</i>
Winter Night/Away	62-65°F	<i>Save 10% per degree lowered</i>
Vacation (Winter)	55°F	<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:

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

Schedule Your Maintenance Today!

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Serving Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Potomac, and surrounding areas