GUIDELINES FOR RE-STARTING WATER DAMAGED HEATING AND COOLING EQUIPMENT

The Department of Codes and Building Safety urges you to use extreme caution when restarting any Heating or Cooling Equipment that has been submerged or water damaged during flooding. Prior to re-starting any equipment you should have a licensed Mechanical contractor inspect the equipment and clean or repair as necessary prior to putting back in use.

Below are some guidelines to help determine if replacement is the better choice than repair.

The Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Institute (AHRI) has compiled a list of heating and cooling equipment for homeowners to consider replacing if flood damaged:

Gas Furnaces and Boilers: If there is any question whether flood water has reached a gas furnace or boiler, it should be checked by a qualified contractor. This equipment has gas valves and controls that are especially vulnerable to water damage from floods damage that might not be visible. Corrosion begins inside the valves and controls, and damage may not be apparent, even if the outside of the device is clean and dry. At a minimum, this damage can result in reliability problems.

Electric Furnaces: An electric furnace consists of electrically heated coils, a fan to provide air circulation across the coils, and controls that include safety relays. As with a gas furnace, an electric furnace is susceptible to corrosion and damage from flood water, creating potential reliability problems or safety hazards. If there is any question whether flood water has reached an electric furnace, homeowners should have it checked by a contractor.

Propane Heating: Use extreme caution where there is the potential for propane leaks and have propane equipment checked, repaired and/or replaced by a contractor as quickly as possible after a flood. In every case, contractors must replace all valves and controls that have been in contact with flood water. The gas pressure regulator on a propane system should also be checked. This regulator contains a small vent hole to sense outside pressure. For effective gas pressure regulation, this hole must always remain unobstructed. During a flood, debris can easily plug the hole, causing dangerous malfunction or corrosion.

Radiant Floor Heat: With this type of heating system, electrically heated cables or tubing circulating a fluid are embedded underneath or within the flooring material. The cables warm the floor, which in turn warms the room by radiant heat. If the floor becomes wet from a flood, it can weaken and perhaps crack and may need replacement. Both electrical cables and tubing can be damaged due to a wet floor. Therefore, a qualified professional should be consulted to determine whether the system can continue to be used.

Heat Pumps and Air Conditioning Systems: Split air conditioning and heat pump systems have power and control wiring between the indoor and outdoor parts of the system, and piping through which refrigerant flows through the system. If flood water has repositioned either the indoor or outdoor units of a split system even by a small amount, there is a potential for refrigerant leaks. The system will then require major repair or full replacement. If the refrigerant system remains intact after the flood, the entire system should be cleaned, dried and disinfected. Homeowners should have a contractor check the indoor and outdoor units' electrical and refrigeration connections, including all control circuits. The decision to repair or replace should be made after consultation with a qualified professional on a case by case basis.

Ductwork: If a house under storm repair contains a central forced air system, attention should also be paid to the ductwork. A contractor will not try to salvage duct insulation that has been in contact with flood water, but will replace it because it is impossible to decontaminate. The contractor also will clean, dry and disinfect the ductwork itself. A thorough job will require disassembling the ductwork, but the silver lining is that such repairs will allow the contractor to seal joints in the ductwork and improve insulation to reduce heat and cooling loss.

The Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Institute (AHRI) is the trade association which represents manufacturers of air conditioning, heating and commercial refrigeration equipment. For more information visit the following website http://www.ahrinet.org

Department of Codes and Building Safety
800 2nd Avenue, South
Nashville, TN 37210

Mechanical Information 615-862-6570
http://www.nashville.gov/codes