



Operating and Maintaining Your Ductless Mini-Split

Consult the manufacturer's documents specific to your make and model.

We offer the following suggestions if not covered in those materials.



OPERATING



Temperature Settings — “Set it and forget it”

In the heating season, you may not actually save any energy by turning the temperature setting down at night. However if you prefer the house to be a little cooler at night, you could — using the hand controller or, optionally, a cell phone or a wall mounted thermostat — turn the setting down 2-4°.

There is a temperature sensor inside each indoor unit, often high on a wall— not in your hand controller or your cell phone, whichever you may use. As a result, during the heating season, you may wish to set the temperature at a higher level than you are used to, for example, at 72° rather than 68°, to achieve a comfortable temperature. For more accurate control, a wall-mounted thermostat can be installed 15 to 30 feet away from the indoor unit and at about 42 inches above the floor.

If your system was installed with Wi-Fi controls, you can purchase a remote temperature sensor to pair with each indoor unit. The unit will then read the temperature wherever its sensor is located.

Set the heating/cooling mode to “heat” in the winter, or “cool” in the summer. Avoid the “auto” heating/cooling mode. However, setting the fan to “auto” is fine and is often the best choice.

Settings for Multiple Indoor Units

Most outdoor units cannot heat and cool at the same time. Therefore, for multiple indoor units connected to one outdoor unit, all indoor units should be set either to heat or cool, but not both. If one zone is consistently too hot or cold no matter what you do, consult with your installer.

Using Your Older Heating System as a Backup

If you still have an older system, set it about 5-10° lower than your mini-split, so it only assists in the very coldest conditions. If you have had “integrated controls” installed for both your mini-split and your older heating system, have the installer set up the controls to minimize older system use as much as possible while maintaining reasonable comfort.

Cold Areas

Be aware of the risk of freezing pipes. You can place thermometers in cold parts of the house to see if the temperatures stay 10° or more above freezing. Pipes in the basement or the rest of the house near exterior walls are at higher risk. Be sure to remedy any cold air leaks and insufficient insulation.

Absences

If you do not need the mini-split to operate for many days or weeks and if there is absolutely no risk of freezing temperatures, you could turn the temperature setting down or turn the unit off altogether until needed again.

Sounds

It is normal to hear occasional gurgling, hissing or other sounds.



MAINTAINING



Outdoors

Clean around the outdoor unit and gently brush, blow or vacuum it once a year, taking special care to avoid touching and bending the delicate cooling fins. It is normal to see some condensation water from indoors drip from the drip pipe outside.

Indoors

Initially, check the filters once a month. Clean according to the owner's manual. Then determine your own cleaning frequency based on how dirty the filters appear. Depending on the room usage, the frequency may range from monthly to annually.

If there is water dripping indoors from an indoor unit, that may indicate the condensation drain is plugged which would require servicing the indoor unit. This servicing might be needed every 5 years.

Professional Maintenance

Aside from the frequent filter cleaning, it would be prudent — at least every five years — to have the indoor condensation tray and its pipe cleaned, coils cleaned and the entire system thoroughly checked out for leaks and any other issues.

The HeatSmart Alliance is a volunteer-supported non-profit organization that encourages adoption of energy-efficient heat pumps, including mini-splits, in certain eastern Massachusetts communities.

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