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Comment Received From: Mahesh Siddappa

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Hardship from HERS Testing

This is regarding the HERS Duct Testing for a Residential house.

We got two new furnaces installed, one downstairs in the garage and one upstairs in the closet. We got a quote for the two furnaces and the Duct Testing. I paid for both to the furnace installer while the duct testing was being done by the tester. The installer (contractor) did not seem to know what was involved. The duct testing failed. Our house is 22+ years old. No smoke testing was done, planned or provided. I just heard about it much later. It took more than 3 hours, during which both the tester and the contractor people were desperate trying to find a leak and wrap it or close it. The tester left that day. It cost me \$500.00.

Since then, the contractor has returned and sealed what he thinks needs to be fixed. He does not have the same testing tool(s), as it is his understanding that it is a conflict of interest. I have spent money for his efforts, and we hope it will resolve the leaks in the ducts. Now the tester is ready to come back, but it will cost me more. As they continue to test and seal what they think will help, it will cost me money as I have to pay per hour to the contractor and the tester, with no end in sight. The contractor refuses to give me a quote, as he does not know how much time it will take. We don't know how much time we should ask from the duct tester and reserve his time. Both prefer to be paid by the hour beyond some minimal setup and test time.

I don't know how much I am expected to spend. Is there a maximum amount of time or money that is required by the home owner to spend? What are the guidelines for any exemption from the HERS duct testing for a residential homeowner?

Long term, I think we need some guidelines for the furnace installer, tester and the homeowner. We need some maximum limits to be set. While I very well understand the benefits to a home owner and in general, this could potentially become a severe hardship, with costs stretching far beyond any benefits.

Mahesh Siddappa
msiddappa@yahoo.com