



## Is an HVAC agreement right for you?

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### JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -

Highly rated HVAC specialists tell Angie's List the majority of their emergency repair calls can be traced back to poor maintenance. You don't want to be stuck without air conditioning in this Florida heat.

A typical tune up on your air conditioner is going to cost around \$70 to \$100, but many companies do offer maintenance agreements.

### What are maintenance agreements?

Maintenance agreements between you and an [HVAC](#) service provider wherein you pay a set annual fee for which you get guaranteed services for your HVAC system. With the most basic contracts, the service is a checkup and tune-up for your system at the start of the winter and summer seasons. You can also find contracts that include parts and service for problems found during those checkups, and some will even include emergency service. The more services the contract includes, the more you will pay.

**Benefits:**

If you have a service contract, you will be more likely to get an annual tune-up for your HVAC system. This will improve your energy efficiency, as the technician will be able to spot dirty filters and other problems that are impacting your efficiency, helping your system to work more affordably overall. Having a qualified technician inspect your system a few times per year means you can identify issues while they are still small and easy to fix, rather than waiting until they damage your system or become expensive. These plans usually also offer priority emergency service and a discount on parts.

**Drawbacks:**

They can cost between \$150 and \$500 a year depending on the amount of services offered. If the system is new and still under a manufacturer's warranty, the cost may not be worthwhile. Any major repairs are going to be covered under the warranty. The contract may cost more than the service or repair it offers. Keep in mind that you will be paying the fee every year regardless of whether or not you have a repair done. If you go five years without needing a major repair but are paying \$250 a year for the contract, you may be paying far more than it's worth.

**Angie's List Tips: Is this plan right for me?**

- Before signing up for a service contract, find out the cost of routine maintenance for your unit and make sure the cost of the service contract is comparable. You may find that it is cheaper to simply pay for the routine service out-of-pocket.
- Find out if emergency repairs are included. If they are and the price is reasonable, you will be in good shape to purchase. If not, you may want to look elsewhere for the service.
- Most will offer a discount on repairs, but how much? With some, you're given a priority status over other customers, but what does that mean?
- Always read the fine print before signing, making sure you know what actions on your part could nullify the contract. Are there any restrictions based on the age of the equipment? Hidden fees and exclusions?
- Make sure that you choose a company that is honest, trustworthy and reliable. Remember, the service contract is only as good as the service provider backing it.
- If you need expensive repairs, consider replacing the unit. Multiply the age of the equipment by the estimated repair cost. If the result is higher than \$5,000, replacement is probably your best bet. If it's lower, you might do better to invest in a repair. For example, if you've gotten an estimate of \$350 to repair a 10-year-old air conditioner, the \$5,000 rule of thumb indicates that repair is the best value.

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