



# Benefits of an Add-On Heat Pump vs. Straight Air Conditioning

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More and more we are getting phone calls from customers who are interested in add-on heat pumps. To these people I say "Good for you!" When considering adding cooling to your home, an add-on heat pump in many cases can be a better idea than just an air conditioner. The reasons for this are strictly a personal choice, so let's run through them quickly:

- **Back-Up Heat** - while a straight cooling unit will do just that - cool, a heat pump will heat and cool your home. This gives you back-up heat. Whether you use the heat pump for back-up heating or your existing gas, oil, or electric furnace for heating, you always have a back-up source to heat your home and you'll never be cold while waiting for an over-booked service technician.
- **Even Temperatures** - this is a heated topic between those who love gas and those who love heat pumps. Some of us prefer gas heating. I'm one of them. I like the blast of hot air and I love my kitchen toe kick when I'm cooking in the winter! But the experts say that this gives the homeowner temperature swings when the house cools down, then the furnace blasts hot air into the room. We gas-loving people complain about the "cold" air a heat pump blows into the house. Well, this is not necessarily a drawback to the heat pump. While the unit will run on longer cycles than your average gas furnace, it blows a very constant 90-100 degree air into the home until it reaches temperature. If you already have a gas furnace and are debating between an air conditioner and an add-on heat pump, consider the even temperatures and imagine being out in the cold snow on a particularly cold winter day. You can come inside, switch the thermostat to "emergency heat" and the gas furnace will kick on, blasting you with hot air until you're warmed up. Then you can switch the emergency heat off and enjoy the even heat pump temperatures again. It's a win-win situation!
- **Eliminate Drafts & Humidity Removal** - Gas furnaces are plagued with the accusation that they remove humidity from the home and push it out of the flue, contributing to "draftiness" in the winter. While this is not untrue, we Oregonians also know that lack of humidity isn't usually a problem here in the Northwest. However, if you and your home are more susceptible to cold drafts, a heat pump will suit you well.
- **May Last Longer** - a unit that runs year-round will wear out faster, right? Not necessarily. Would you expect a car that you use only during the summer to sit for 9 months out of the year and start right up when the warm weather hits? Of course not! Outdoor units use compressors and because compressors are self-lubricating, a heat pump that runs year-round is constantly lubricating itself as it runs. The straight air conditioner is not, making it more likely to leave you without air conditioning on the first hot day of the year.
- **Choice of Fuel** - if gas/oil prices shoot up in the next month, you have electricity to fall back on and vice versa. The Utilities are very unstable lately, you could switch back and forth daily depending on which fuel was cheaper if you wanted. Okay, we all don't have that much time on our hands!
- **Utility Incentives** - Check with your local power company. Consumers Power, Inc. offers rebates for high-efficiency heat pump installations, which can help with the initial extra cost of a heat pump installation.

As much as I would like everyone to come over to the natural gas side, I can't hate the heat pump. When/if you consider a cooling system for your home, have them bid a heat pump as well!