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Top Five Reasons to Buy a Heat Pump

Our home was built in 1983 and is heated by a combined electric and wood furnace. When we purchased the house a few years ago we wanted to install an air-to-air heat pump for a number of reasons, and finally this season we did it!

We do not live in an area where natural gas is available, so a heat pump seemed like the obvious choice. That said, our first choice would have been solar, but we have too many trees around our home to provide effective solar energy, and I am not willing to chop down 40 trees in order to heat my home with solar!

It is important to note that air-to-air heat pumps do require duct work in the home for air flow. Fortunately, we already had ducts with our old heating system, allowing us to keep the cost of the heat pump lower than if we needed to install them.

We researched a number of heat pump brands prior to purchase. We looked at product specifications on the Internet, read consumer reports and forums, and talked to other people with heat pumps. After the research, we opted for a Trane unit. It was slightly higher in cost than some other brands, but appears to be more efficient, sturdy, have a longer, more comprehensive warranty and operates quieter than other models.

So, here are my top five reasons for installing a heat pump:

1. Save money – air-to-air heat pumps operate for between one-quarter to one-third of the cost of typical electric heat. I have actually measured the reduction so far with my real-time energy monitor and found that drop in electricity consumption is substantial – consistent with what we believed to be true. I estimate that we will save between \$800 to \$900 per year.
2. Lower carbon footprint – reducing electricity costs lowers our carbon footprint because we are now purchasing much less electricity. Our heat pump will lower the carbon footprint of our home by about four tonnes per year.
3. Comfortable heat – I have always noticed that heat pumps provide comfortable heat, and with a new system, distributes heat nicely around the home. We also had a programmable thermostat installed with the heat pump so we can turn the temperature down at night and it comes back up automatically in the mornings.
4. Air conditioning – not that we need air conditioning much in the summer (maybe only ten days or so), but one of the great benefits of the heat pump is that it also acts as an air conditioner in the summer. So essentially, the heat pump serves double duty.

5. Save money – did I mention saving money? Heat pumps should be considered an investment in your home. They cost anywhere from \$12,000 to \$15,000 installed, so it does take a few years to have payback. However, they will increase the value of your home and will save hundreds of dollars per year. There are also government incentives to ease the overall cost of the heat pump, such as the Federal Home Renovation Tax Credit (if installed before February 1, 2010).

If you are considering a new way to heat (and cool) your home, take a look at heat pumps, they provide cost effective and comfortable heat. Our family made a conscious decision to invest in the value of our home, lower our annual heating costs, and reduce our carbon footprint all at the same time. I call that a win-win-win!

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