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Environmental Health

Breathe Better Air

Overlooking or Neglecting the Equipment that Provides the Air to Suites Can, Over Time, Result in Poor Indoor Air Quality



Indoor air quality is a vital part of condo living. Good, clean air helps promote a healthy and comfortable living environment at home. Unfortunately, many residents and condo corporations overlook or neglect the equipment that provides the air to their suites. Over time, this can result in poor indoor air quality.

Let's take a closer look at what lies behind that familiar white access panel—it's typically a vertical fan coil.

To provide conditioned air to condo suites, installation of vertical fan coils began in the 1970s and continue to be installed today. Vertical fan coils make up a significant part of the high-rise HVAC industry, making it very likely you have one in your condo unit.

As with other household appliances, fan coils have a lifespan. Fan coils manufacturer's, specify a 20-year lifespan. After 20 years of operation, your fan coil should be thoroughly inspected by an HVAC professional to produce a thorough condition assessment report.

What Is a Vertical Fan Coil?

Vertical fan coils are a type of HVAC system commonly found in high-rise residential buildings. They consist of a fan and a water coil (containing hot or cold water) to heat, cool and ventilate the suite. Fan coils draw in air from the suite, condition it, and supply it back to the suite. You control all of these features with your thermostat. Vertical fan coil units are installed during the original construction phase.

The Indoor Air Problem

Age, improper care and/or minimal maintenance are common factors that lead your fan coil to negatively impact indoor air quality over time. Dirt, dust, pet hair and other particles build up in the fan coil and spread throughout your condo suite. In addition to this, older fan coils can contain mould. As we all know, mould and airborne particles can be very hazardous to your health. Don't just take our word for it, The University of Toronto published a report on the effects of mould growth in fan coil units.

Check it out here: www.uniluxcrfc.com/resources/UofT-Report/

So, what can be done?

The Retrofit Solution

Replacing vertical fan coils is the best way to improve indoor air quality in older condo suites. Apart from improving indoor air quality, there are many other benefits.

How It Works

Complete fan coil replacement removes all the old components from the fan coil cabinet. Eliminate the dirty coil, electrical components, drain pan and most importantly – the insulation – that is contributing to poor indoor air quality. Disposing these components enables access to clean the bare fan coil cabinet. A proper remediation will ensure every last particle is removed from the cabinet following the guidelines outlined in EACO Level 2 Remediation.

This step ensures all the built-up debris that negatively impacts your air quality is gone for good.

ILLUSTRATION BY HAYDEN MAYNARD

It's recommended that buildings aged 20-years or older have their fan coil units assessed.

Next, replace everything with brand-new fan coil equipment. New fan coil designs feature all new, clean components carefully selected to mitigate airborne particles and mould issues. They include removable coils that can be thoroughly cleaned on both sides. New, closed-cell insulation prevents microbial growth on the walls of the cabinet, while updated drain pans disallow standing water in the cabinet.

All these features contribute to a cleaner fan coil that's able to deliver optimal indoor air quality.

More Benefits

Apart from residents breathing cleaner air, they will also save energy on heating, cooling and ventilation. New electronic equipment is far more advanced than technology from the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

New retrofit fan coils offer more efficient motors, blowers and electrical wiring, providing noticeable energy savings.

Significant Savings

Field tests indicate up to a 75% savings in kilowatt-hour (KWh) usage with a new retrofit fan coil. The bulk of the savings comes from the highly-efficient ECM motors.

Book an Assessment

It's recommended that buildings aged 20-years or older have their fan coil units assessed. A qualified technician should look over your units to determine the operational and air quality status of the fan coil.

Don't just choose anybody. Select an inspector that is knowledgeable about fan coils and the standards set out by The Environ-

mental Abatement Council of Ontario.

Consider Replacement

Replacing fan coils is a cost-effective way to guarantee long-lasting heating, cooling and ventilation as well as optimal indoor air quality. Proper retrofit fan coil replacements can be done in a few hours with minimal disruption to the suite and resident. All work can be done without any drywall destruction.

Whether or not the fan coils are owned by the corporation or by the residents, fan coil replacement is a breeze. The Condo Corporation can organize the work, which allows the Condo Corporation to apply for energy savings rebates. Or, you can choose an owner participation program. This allows residents to sign up for fan coil replacement on a unit-by-unit basis. Industry-leading fan coil companies also offer financing options to make replacing your fan coil easier.

If your building is approaching the 20-year-old mark, you owe it to yourself and your fellow residents, to have a thorough fan coil assessment completed. **CV**



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