

Warm air units

An alternative heating system

During the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of warm air heating systems were installed in private and social housing in the UK.

At the time they were a very popular form of heating for domestic properties as they were extremely reliable - indeed, many are still in use today.

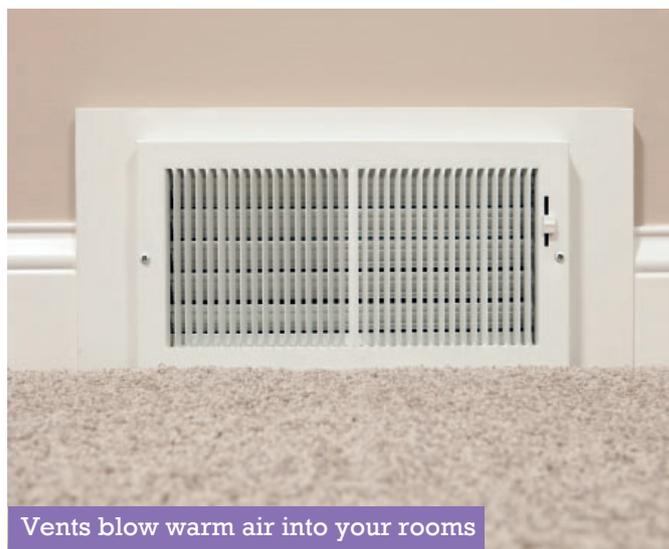
Warm air heating systems work by passing cool air through a heat exchanger fuelled by gas or electricity. Once warmed, the air is then blown into rooms through vents in the floor, walls or ceiling.

However, compared to modern 'wet' central heating systems with a boiler and radiators, these older systems do not provide the same level of efficiency and controllability needed to keep running costs to a minimum. Therefore, they are now being replaced by a new generation of warm air central heating systems which allow stable room temperatures to be maintained, are quieter, and have greater fuel efficiency.

Pros and cons of warm air heating systems

Warm air heating systems don't need a hot water distribution system (pipes and radiators), so you are less at risk of household plumbing problems. The systems can also be good for small properties because you save space in your rooms by not having radiators or wall mounted heaters. As the system heats the air directly, the warm-up time is relatively quick. It can also be more expensive to install an entire, new wet central heating system than to update an existing warm air system.

A new replacement warm air heating system can have an extra advantage for people who suffer with allergies. As air is drawn through the system it passes through a filter which removes pollutants, like pollen, dust and mould spores before being blown out of the vents. With modern warm air heating systems the air can be filtered up to six times per hour.



Vents blow warm air into your rooms

One possible drawback with warm air heating systems is that they have the potential to create draughts through the house. Some of these systems also have limited controllability compared to a modern central heating system which would have controls like a room thermostat and thermostatic radiator valves. And the dust filter needs to be cleaned or replaced manually on a regular basis.

Just like a wet central heating system, it is important that warm air units are serviced annually. Due to the air being blown around the system by a large fan, it is common for dust and debris to build up which can reduce the system's performance, so it needs regular cleaning.

If you do not currently have a warm air system in your property, converting to one can be complicated and expensive due to the special piping and ducts required. Instead, it would be advisable to consider upgrading your boiler to a high efficiency condensing model or replacing your old storage heaters with more modern ones.

"If you have an old warm air heating system, it's worth replacing it with a new one that filters the air"



Turn over for energy saving tips ▶

A few ways to cut your electricity and gas use, and save money ...



Give your clothes a day in the sun; and give your tumble drier a break. Clothes dried in the fresh air feel great, and there are drying days in winter, too.

When you're cooking, keep the oven door shut as much as possible; every time you open it, nearly a quarter of the heat escapes.



Food in the oven cooks faster when the air inside flows freely, so don't put foil on the racks.

Don't leave your phone on charge all night. It only needs three hours – and try not to leave the TV and other kit on stand-by.



Catch 'em young. Encourage your children to switch off electric toys and lights that they're not using. They'll soon get the hang of saving energy.

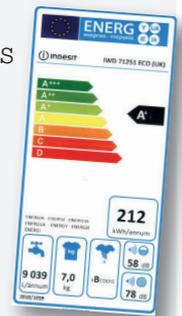
Cup of tea or coffee? Only fill the kettle with as much water as you'll actually use (but make sure you cover the metal element at the base).



Dodge the draught!

Fit draught-excluders to your front door, letter box and key hole, and draw your curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.

Buying a new appliance? Check the energy label and buy A-rated goods for the most efficient.



Be a friend to your freezer. Defrost it regularly to help it run more efficiently.

Turn your heating down by just 1 degree. You'll hardly notice the change in temperature, but it'll make a big difference to your heating bill.



Wait until you have a full load before running the dishwasher or washing machine. One full load uses less energy (and water) than two half-loads.

Sleep tight. Make sure all the lights are turned off when you go to bed, or use a low-wattage night light if you do need to leave one on.



New computer? Laptops typically use around 85% less energy than a new desktop PC.



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