

***5 Reasons Why Your Utility Bills Are Higher***

***Than They Were a Few Years Ago***

Have your utility bills been steadily creeping up year after year? While rate increases aren’t uncommon, you could be spending a lot more on gas, electricity, and water than necessary.

Below, we’ll provide some insight into common reasons why homeowners have such high utility bills—and what you can do about it.

***1. Your HVAC equipment needs maintenance.***

We know we sound like a broken record, but it’s the absolute truth: without [routine maintenance](https://www.rescueairtx.com/about-us/club-membership/), your heating and cooling system’s performance will continue to decrease while its energy use will continue to increase. By doing something as simple as replacing a clogged air filter, you can reduce your AC’s energy use by [5 to 15 percent](https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/maintaining-your-air-conditioner). Imagine what getting the entire system tuned up could do.

***2. You own aging heating and cooling equipment.***

Eventually, all of your home’s systems will need a replacement, and that includes your heater and air conditioner. According to the [National Association of Homebuilders](https://www.interstatebrick.com/sites/default/files/library/nahb20study20of20life20expectancy20of20home20components.pdf), these are the average lifespans you can expect from HVAC systems:

* Furnaces: 15 to 20 years
* Air conditioning units: 10 to 15 years
* Heat pumps: 16 years

These numbers obviously can vary depending on usage and how well-maintained the system is. However, once your unit has reached 15 to 20 years, it’s probably costing you a fortune in cooling costs. At that age, an HVAC system requires more energy than it used to in order to keep your home comfortable. Consequently, you’ll have higher energy bills until you [install a replacement](https://www.rescueairtx.com/air-conditioning/installation/).

***3. Your HVAC ductwork has a lot of leaks.***

Air duct leaks are no joke: you could be losing [up to 30 percent](https://www.energystar.gov/campaign/heating_cooling/duct_sealing) of the air moving through your ductwork due to gaps, holes, and air ducts that were never properly connected. We also frequently see air ducts that are pinched too tightly by the bands that hold them in place; this results in restricted airflow.

These ductwork problems can affect both new and old HVAC systems alike. If you’re experiencing problems like high energy bills or consistently weak airflow, it could be well worth the money to get your air ducts sealed, repaired, or replaced, depending on their condition.

***4. Your home has plumbing leaks—maybe some you don’t even know about.***

Even “small” leaks, like dripping faucets or showerheads, can waste [hundreds to thousands](https://www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-leak-week) of gallons of water in just one year. The more leaks like this around the house that go ignored, the higher your water bills will be over time.

But while some leaks are easy to see, others can go hidden for a long time. The first sign of a hidden leak for most people is an unusually high water bill. Hidden leaks can occur in numerous locations, including:

* Behind a wall
* Under the floor
* Beneath your home’s foundation (this is known as a slab leak)
* Below ground (this can happen when a main water line breaks)

If you suspect that your home might have a hidden leak, you can use your water meter to “catch it in the act”:

1. Start by checking your water meter. We recommend taking a picture of it on your phone so that you don’t have to write anything down.
2. Then refrain from using any water or water-using appliances in your home for two hours.
3. Once two hours have passed, check your water meter again. If your water meter has changed at all, then there is most likely a leak in your home.

***5. There’s sediment buildup in your water heater.***

If you’re like most people in the U.S., you own a tank-style water heater, which stores and heats hot water in a big, metal storage tank. Over time, heating up water in the tank can cause crusty mineral deposits to build up inside of it.

Those mineral deposits can coat your water heater’s heating element (the part that makes the water hot). The mineral deposits make the heating element less effective, so your water heater will need to spend more time (and energy) heating your water. That translates into a higher energy bill.

You can avoid this problem by flushing your water heater’s tank once a year. Just be careful to not scald yourself with the hot water inside. You may prefer to [ask a plumber for help](https://www.rescueairtx.com/plumbing/) with your water heater’s maintenance.

Keep in mind that tankless water heaters are also susceptible to mineral buildup that will reduce efficiency. Therefore, tankless water heaters should also be flushed once a year to avoid this problem.

**When you need HVAC help, AC Experts Cooling and Heating has got you covered! For assistance in the Greater Phoenix area, call us today at (480-386-6980)**