



Home comfort news
for the customers of
Atlas Air & W. Skerratt

An Engineer's Opinion

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Editorial

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President

70 Years of Superior Service

This year marks Atlas's 70th anniversary. We're very proud of this milestone: since 1932, Atlas has successfully met many challenges, including a depression, a world war, and the Energy Crisis in the 1970s. Ironically, the last five years—although a relatively calm period in history—have been some of the most challenging.

Five years ago, numerous small, independent contracting businesses dominated the heating and air conditioning industry, and both the gas and hydro utilities were still regulated. At that point a strong movement towards consolidation began. The gas utility and major manufacturers raced to snap up small contracting businesses and turn them into outlets for their products. At the same time, big box stores began to sell many of the products that were previously only available through heating contractors. As a result, the heating and air conditioning industry has become a much more retail-focused industry with few strong, truly independent service-oriented contractors left.

Not that you could easily tell: many formerly independent contractors still maintain their original outward appearance. However, if consolidation hasn't changed the face of contracting businesses, it has certainly changed the heart. A big corporation simply cannot

match the service and personal connection that an independent contractor can provide.

For example, as an independent company, we are free to take an unbiased look at available products. We can source out the best equipment for any given job and are not required to use specific brands or models. When you call our office with a question, you reach our office, not a call-center in Vancouver. You get the immediate attention of one of our customer service representatives—real people who know all of the details of your job. If you want to speak to any of the management staff, including me, all you have to do is ask. Finally, our company is locally owned and operated, which means our employees spend money locally and our profits stay in the community.

Staying independent is not easy in our industry, but we have two advantages. The first is our membership in ClimateCare, a cooperative of independent Ontario contractors that offers group support to its members without taking away control. The second, and most important, is our people. Without a doubt, we have assembled the best group of people ever to work in this industry. With them, we embrace the future with enthusiasm, confident that our highly skilled team can continue to provide the outstanding service you've come to expect from us.

Roger Grochmal



About *An Engineer's Opinion*

An Engineer's Opinion is published to assist homeowners in creating the healthiest, most comfortable environment in their homes at the most reasonable cost. If you have questions, criticism, or input, we want to hear them. Please call me personally at (905) 279-3440 or e-mail me at rgrochmal@atlasair.ca.

Great People Are the Key to Our Success

We are pleased to say that during the constant heat of this past summer, not one of our customers had to wait for service. That's because our goal has always been great customer service. At Atlas, we think this means a lot more than simply a phone number to call when you have a problem. Our idea of great service means that

- We respond quickly to your calls and solve your problem efficiently;
- When you talk to one of our staff with a problem, that person will look after your problem until it is resolved;

- You get to speak to the same people each time you call so that they get to know you and your personal requirements;
- We have people in every area of the city so that, if you have an emergency, we can get someone to you quickly.

We do our best to make your experience with us to be relaxed and pleasant. Of course, what makes this possible is our terrific staff, so we want to introduce you to the people who conscientiously handle each of your calls. Our branch administrators are Kim Windsor, Toronto North & West; Diane Rego, W. Skerratt Division; Sue Stewart, Toronto Central; Rhonda

Campbell, Mississauga & Oakville; and Karen Porchina, Hamilton. Lesley Morgan is our receptionist and Agnes Kieltyka is our part-time student.



Kim Windsor, Lesley Morgan, Diane Rego, Sue Stewart, Rhonda Campbell, Agnes Kieltyka



Karen Porchina

Atlas's New Training Center Benefits Our Customers

Heating contractors are always looking for good service technicians. These particular trades people are in high demand across North America because they have to be skilled in a variety of trades, including heating, air conditioning, sheet metal work, electrical work, and plumbing. They also have to be certified in ventilation and refrigerant handling. At Atlas, we are very fortunate to have a number of excellent technicians working with us.

However, technology is always changing, so as skilled as our techs are, we require them to spend at least 40 hours per year taking classes to maintain and improve their skill set. Recently, we developed our own training

center here at Atlas so that we can provide our techs with the precise training they need for the particular work we do. In addition to the formal training, the training center provides a setting for our service people to trade insights and observations from their experiences in the field.

The new Atlas "school" benefits our customers most of all: with all of the extra training, our service techs are the best in the business. We know of no other company with the same commitment to developing their people as we do at Atlas. You can be confident that Atlas service technicians will complete each job correctly, efficiently, and with sound judgment.

The Latest Mid-Efficiency Furnaces Deliver Value and Comfort

“AFUE” Words About Furnace Efficiency

The AFUE (Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency) represents the amount of usable energy (heat) that is delivered from each unit of fuel. So, if your gas furnace is rated with an AFUE of 60%, it means that for every cubic meter of gas that you buy, only 60% of the total amount of heat in that cubic meter actually goes into heating your home.

If you're in the market for a new heating system, then you can go with either a mid- or a high-efficiency furnace. In last fall's issue of *An Engineer's Opinion*, we talked about high-efficiency furnaces in detail, and they are a great choice. However, a high-quality mid-efficiency furnace might be the better choice for your particular situation.

The three principal differences between a mid- and a high-efficiency furnace are cost, efficiency, and the way that the furnace “breathes”. Mid-efficiency furnaces are less expensive than their high-efficiency counterparts, and they are also less efficient, with an AFUE rating of approximately 82%. High-efficiency furnaces have an AFUE rating of at least 90% (see explanation of AFUE, left).

Furnaces breathe by drawing in fresh air and exhausting the combustion by-products. Mid-efficiency furnaces draw in air from inside the house, and they vent combustion gases through a chimney (either masonry or metal). High-efficiency furnaces draw combustion air from outside the home, and vent

through an opening in the side of the house instead of through a chimney.

So how do you choose between a mid- and a high-efficiency furnace? In general, if cost is a factor, then a mid-efficiency furnace might be best for you. You can still save on heating by upgrading insulation, sealing gaps around doors and windows, and by setting back your thermostat by a couple of degrees at night or when you're away. If you like to run your furnace fan continuously (as you must for air cleaning or ventilation), then you might consider a mid-efficiency furnace with a DC motor, which can save quite a bit on your electricity bill.

A mid-efficiency furnace requires a chimney that can be adapted for a furnace with a metal liner. If you don't have such a chimney, then a mid-efficiency furnace probably won't work for you. On the other hand, if you have a finished basement, then a mid-efficiency furnace may be the better choice because it vents straight up. A high-efficiency furnace requires piping to the side of the house, which might mean ripping up some walls.

If you have questions about the kind of furnace that would be best for you, please call.



Carrier and Ruud Introduce High-Quality Mid-Efficiency Furnaces

Both of our two favourite furnace suppliers, Carrier and Ruud, are coming out with new mid-efficiency furnaces this fall.

Carrier has introduced a complete new line of mid-efficiency furnaces under the Weathermaker 8000 label. They have a standard model, a 2-stage model, and a variable-speed model with 2-stage heating. All

furnaces are reduced in height to 34" to make them very flexible in application. They can also be installed and vented in almost any configuration.

Ruud has a new mid-efficiency furnace, the UGPL, to complete their lineup. The UGPL has a variable-speed blower with 2-stage heating. This is a companion to the UGPK, which has 2-stage heating. Both furnaces are 34" high.

Atlas Notes

How Clean Do Your Ducts Need to Be?


The barrage of telemarketing and coupon mailers to get your ducts cleaned never seems to end. The reality is that air flows through your ducts at 800 feet per minute and very little dirt accumulates in ducts. A good furnace filter will collect most airborne dirt, dust, and pollen. To clean most of the dust in your ductwork yourself, take off the cold air return grilles and vacuum up the dust that accumulates there. There is really no need to do this more than every couple of years or so unless you've done some heavy construction in your home. Beware of unscrupulous duct cleaners out there who will attempt to sell you things such as air cleaners. Most duct cleaners don't have the proper training and certification necessary to install air-cleaning equipment correctly, and can cause damage to your heating or air conditioning equipment.

Furnace Filter Fit

We often see furnace filters inserted into poorly built filter boxes or into boxes that are a different size. It is important that the filter fit nice and snug into the frame to keep air and the dust it carries from going around the filter and bypassing it entirely. This can result in expensive service calls to clean blower wheels, furnace heat exchangers, and air conditioning evaporator coils. If you're not sure that your filter fits properly or you're not sure how to change it, please ask your service person when we come to clean and check your furnace.

We Offer Convenient Payment Options

Many of our competitors offer costly finance contracts to make paying for services easier. At Atlas, we accept both VISA and MasterCard because we think you should have the convenience of financing and still be able to take advantage of the rewards offered by your own credit card company. To make things even easier, we will be able to take debit cards and payments through online banking programs in the near future.

 **\$150 OFF**
2-stage mid-efficiency furnace models Ruud UGPK or Carrier 58CTA)

OR

\$250 OFF
Variable-speed mid-efficiency furnace models (Ruud UGPL or Carrier 58CVA)

Offer expires December 31, 2002.
This offer may not be combined with any other.

Ruud Delivers Value Under New Weatherking Label

This past year, RUUD introduced a new line of furnaces and air conditioners under the Weatherking label. It is a no-frills product for the value-conscious homeowner. While it doesn't contain all of the bells and whistles of the flagship brand, it does come with the same level of quality and support that you have come to expect from RUUD.



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