



Ken Field

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Services

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Comfort is Optional

Comfort is a little different for everyone. So attempting to provide that to people is not an easy thing to accomplish. Rarely do I get to start from scratch and build a system the way I know it should be. There is usually something already in place and I am tasked with replacing or modifying parts of it to make things more comfortable for the ones writing the check. The general guidelines I work within are a temperature range for heating for cooling. That way the thermostat on the wall can be used for selecting what the owner feels is comfortable. It is up to me to determine how much conditioned air must be brought into each room and figure out how to get it there. Since there is only one thermostat for the whole system, it is important to have the right airflow into each room or the temperature will vary by room. If the duct system is already in place and my task is only to replace the furnace or air conditioner it is not possible for me to do much with respect to correcting room to room temperature variations. I do have a few tricks I have learned over the years but miracles are above my pay grade. Today many of the duct systems in basements have been concealed by drywall and that further limits the possibilities available. Zoning and balancing can't be done if the ducts are inaccessible. In extreme cases where the second floor can't be made comfortable from a single system in the basement, another system must be installed in the attic. Typically I see this problem in homes that are not too old and the problems are due to poor duct design and/or installation. Comfort on the upper floor has never been achieved. Another system means space lost in the attic and more annual maintenance cost but comfort will never be a problem in the future. When the system on the lower floor eventually needs replacement, a smaller size can be used. It would behoove builders to pay more attention to the contractors who provide comfort to their customers. Because most of the heating and air conditioning system is not visible after construction, it is not discussed like the important infrastructure of the home that it is. Installers rarely are given the budget or enough wall space to install a system the proper way and that starts the chain of events leading to an uncomfortable home. Until there is a way to incorporate comfort into the building code, it will not be mandatory to provide it for new homes.


Ken Field is the owner of Slate Belt Energy and Field's Service, Inc. As a certified energy rater and contractor, he is qualified to assess every aspect of energy usage and prescribe solutions to save energy. He can be reached at 610-759-6306 or email Ken@FieldsService.com

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