

East Coast Home Care

We care for your home.



January 2014 Newsletter

It doesn't matter who your Home Watch company is, until it does.

Our 9 years in business coupled with 40 years of residential construction experience has enabled us to create an evolving "best practices" manual for managing Florida properties.

East Coast Home Care's newsletter is intended to share some of these best practices as well as clarify topics that may be confusing to homeowners.

At East Coast Home Care we take pride in "managing" properties, not just "watching" them. I have learned much since establishing East Coast Home Care 9 years ago and continue to learn as unusual situations arise or technology allows us to improve our service.

I am available at all times to discuss questions you may have pertaining to services rendered, property maintenance or capital improvements.

Replace or Repair?

Air conditioners and pool heaters installed during the Florida building boom between 1995 and 2006 are at or approaching their average life cycle. Appliances are similar but they have a greater degree of variation depending on make and model.

A prudent approach to managing these systems in Florida may be to plan for their obsolescence and respond proactively. You may not want to replace a unit while it's running, however you might have a decision in place to replace it when it fails.

Most homeowners with property experience in northern climates are surprised by what they view as these short life cycles. FPL says the average AC unit in south Florida has a 7 - 10 year life cycle. Obviously an air conditioner in south Florida runs (or should run) at least 8 - 9 months a year. AC units run quite a bit to keep even an empty house's humidity under 60% from June - November. Florida is wet, hot and salty, not to mention it's extreme lightening and constant power interruptions.

Of course we can extend any product's life cycle by repairing it (subject to availability of parts), but that can be a slippery slope. Please consider:

- The only parts that are not 10 years old, in a 10 year old unit, are the ones you have replaced.
- After you have spent money to replace a part in January; when another part needs replacing in March, you may feel compelled to repair once again.
- When a unit is down, properly diagnosing the issues usually requires getting it to run. Let's say an AC unit is down and the initial problem is a blown capacitor. A capacitor is installed; the unit runs but is found to be low on coolant. A leak detection test

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finds a leak in one of the coils. In this case both items are billable and the unit is still not operating properly.

- Most AC units installed before 2010 use R-22 as a refrigerant. After Jan 1st, 2010 units began to ship with R-410A as a refrigerant. Your inside unit (air handler) and outside unit (condenser) must use the same refrigerant.
 - As R-22 is phased out (for environmental reasons), it is becoming very expensive.
 - When a major repair requires swapping out one of the units (inside or outside), warranties and coolant issues often make a new system the most viable option.
- Making a replacement decision "under the gun" is not optimum. The pool heater goes down the day before the grandchildren come to town. The AC fails the day before a big dinner party.
 - Needing a system next day can greatly reduce our ability to get competitive quotes and possibly reduce the models that are available to choose from.

Pool Cage Screening

Yes... this is an average life issue also. Screening installed after the large storms in 2005 is getting very brittle. We can replace wall panels as they pull out, but when the ceiling/roof panels start to go it is more economical to replace all of the roof sections. Getting on the top of the cage takes a bit of setting up and it's best not to approach it one panel at a time.

Painting

- We have been offering some very competitive pricing for full exterior painting. We were quite busy all summer and would be happy to supply addresses of houses we have recently completed. The winter is a great time to get this done, but it can take a few weeks to move the project through the ARB's so please plan ahead. I would be happy to assist in this process. Call / [email](#) for a quote.
- We have been using a new Sherwin Williams product, [Tuf-Top](#), for painting garage floors. It really looks great and is available in any color. Call / [email](#) for a quote.

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