

ASK REAL ESTATE

Is It OK to Have Your Air-Conditioners Installed Yet?

It's getting hot out there, but a lot of New Yorkers are still nervous about bringing workers into their apartments.



Nadia Pillon

Q: I haven't hired anyone to install my window unit air-conditioners yet because I've been concerned about letting workers into my apartment during the pandemic. But now that the city is reopening, does that mean it's safe to install them? Will my Manhattan co-op even allow someone to come in and do the work? The NYT_Is It OK to Have Your Air Conditioners Installed Yet_

A: As the city begins to emerge from a long shutdown, many of us are taking a fresh look at our neglected to-do lists and deciding which projects are imperative and which can wait. Getting your air-conditioners installed should be on the top of that list because a hot, stuffy apartment can carry health risks.

Until June 8, when the city entered its first reopening phase, your co-op may not have allowed a worker into your apartment, as many buildings prohibited outside vendors — even for work that may have been permitted as essential during the full shutdown, like HVAC service. But now that nonessential construction is allowed, your neighbors may begin lining up bigger projects, like renovations. So if you want a smaller job done, schedule it now before you're competing with bigger crews for use of the building's elevator.

"Right now is probably easier to get an A/C done, before all the other work starts up," said Dan Wurtzel, the president of FirstService Residential New York, a property management company. When that happens, crews will have to stagger their rides in service elevators, meaning it will take longer and be harder to get work done in an apartment.

Harold Wissner, the company manager of Air-Wave Air Conditioning in the Bronx, which sells, stores and installs window units mostly in Manhattan, expects a rush of orders — and delays — in the next few weeks as the city reopens. "It becomes a problem with manpower," he said. "We've only got so many trucks and so many men you can send out."

Before you schedule the job, call your managing agency and find out how it is handling vendors. It may give your contractor a time slot for arrival, and expect the contractor to follow policies about personal protective equipment.

Ask the vendor to explain its safety protocols. The workers should wear masks and protective booties over their shoes. Open any doors leading to the rooms where the units will be installed, so workers don't need to touch door handles unnecessarily. Open windows for ventilation (not just the one where the unit is going). You and anyone else living in the apartment should wear masks, and stay out of the room if possible.

On the morning of the service call, ask if anyone in the worker's household has been sick. And if you or anyone in your household feels sick, reschedule the appointment. Once the workers leave, wipe down any surfaces that were touched.

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