

What's Current



The Powerful Choice

Visit us at www.novec.com



Gainesville office to stop taking cash payments

Beginning April 4, over-the-counter cash payments will no longer be taken at NOVEC's Gainesville office located at 5399 Wellington Road. Customers may still deposit check payments (no cash) in the drop box located in front of the building along Wellington Road. Please note that payments placed in the drop box will be credited to customers' accounts on the **second** business day following the payment. *All other business functions at the Gainesville office, with the exception of over-the-counter cash payments, will continue as usual.*

Customers who wish to make a cash payment may still do so at NOVEC's Manassas office (10323 Lomond Drive) or Minnieville office (14500 Minnieville Road). Customers also have the option of payment by mail, e-check program or e-billing. Those who pay by credit card may use Speed Pay online at www.novec.com or call 1-866-215-2703. If you have questions about payment options, contact the NOVEC Customer Service Center at (703) 335-0500 or (888) 335-0500 or send e-mail to customerservice@novec.com.

Beware of "phishing" scams

phishing: a scam where the perpetrator sends out legitimate looking e-mails appearing to come from an established organization in an effort to phish (pronounced "fish") for personal and financial information such as your credit card numbers, passwords, etc.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), phishers send an e-mail or pop-up message that claims to be from a business or organization that you deal with – for example, your Internet service provider, bank, online payment service, or a utility company. The message usually says that you need to "update" or "validate" your account information. It might threaten some dire consequence if you don't respond. The message directs you to a Web site that looks just like a legitimate organization's site. However, the Web site is bogus and set up only to steal your information.

Over the past few years, the proliferation of phishing scams has become an increasing problem. ***Please be aware that NOVEC will not contact customers by e-mail requesting that they connect to a NOVEC Web site to update information of any type.***

The FTC offers these tips to help you avoid getting hooked by a phishing scam:

- ▶ If you get an e-mail or pop-up message that asks for personal or financial information, do not reply or click on the link in the message. Legitimate companies don't ask for this information via e-mail.
- ▶ Review credit card and bank statements as soon as you receive them to look for any unauthorized charges.
- ▶ Use anti-virus software and keep it up to date.
- ▶ Be cautious about opening any attachment or downloading any files from e-mails you receive, regardless of who sent them.
- ▶ Report suspicious activity to the FTC by forwarding e-mail to spam@uce.gov or call 1-877-FTC-HELP or visit www.ftc.gov/spam for more information.



Phone surveys help NOVEC improve service

Like many other businesses NOVEC periodically surveys our customers. Although we realize that most customers don't like to be bothered with surveys, your answers help us gauge our performance. If we don't ask, we can't know if we are meeting our customer's expectations.

NOVEC uses an outside company to conduct residential customer satisfaction telephone surveys every month. A random sampling of customers is contacted for the survey that consists

of less than 20 questions. NOVEC does not ask for confidential information, just opinions of our service. Participants are asked to rate the level of NOVEC's service compared to other providers like banks, phone company, cable, etc.

If you are called to complete the NOVEC survey, please take the time to answer the questions. Your answers help us work towards our goal of being the best at delivering customer service. We appreciate the 10-15 minutes that customers take to complete our survey.

Do you have leaky ducts?

If you live in a multi-level home you may notice differences in comfort levels from one floor to another, especially during particularly hot or cold weather. For example in the hot summer months, the downstairs may be very comfortable, while the upstairs is noticeably warmer. One thing that can account for this temperature difference is the condition of the ducts that run throughout your home.

Your home's duct system is an integral part of the central heating and cooling system, distributing heated and cooled air throughout your home. *Supply* ducts carry cooled or heated air from the air handler to your home's registers. *Return* ducts carry inside air back to the air handler.

Duct leaks

Unfortunately, many duct systems have air leaks. Ducts that are not airtight are one of the major causes of home discomfort and high energy bills. A leaky supply duct in an attic or uninsulated crawl space can pump expensive heated or cooled air into these unconditioned areas. Leaks in return ducts draw in hot or cold outside air, forcing the system to work harder. According to the U.S. Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, typical duct systems lose 25 to 40 percent of the heating and cooling energy put out by the furnace or air conditioner. The EPA estimates that the typical family could save up to \$140 annually by having their ductwork sealed.

Fixing the leaks

If you have noticeably different comfort levels from one floor to another you may want to call a professional to evaluate your system. Although minor duct repairs are easy to accomplish, ducts in unconditioned spaces should be sealed and insulated by qualified professionals. A knowledgeable contractor can perform tests to determine whether sealing the ducts will make your home more comfortable.

Duct tape not for ducts

Slap a little duct tape over those leaks and the problem is solved, you ask? Not even close. Studies indicate that virtually all normal duct tape fails over time when wrapped around ductwork. So ironically, you should never use duct tape on ductwork.

Damper controls

Some duct systems have damper controls that can be opened or closed for airflow adjustments depending upon the season. The dampers are installed inside the supply duct system where the air handler connects to the main duct, which branches off to serve all areas of the home.

In the summer, damper controls can be adjusted to send more cool air to upper levels where it is usually needed since hot air rises. In the winter, dampers can be opened to send more heated air to lower levels. The seasonal settings should be marked on the ductwork indicating summer position and winter position.



Energy saving tips:

- ▶ If supply registers are located in the floor they should periodically be removed and vacuumed.
- ▶ Be sure nothing is obstructing your floor or ceiling vents.
- ▶ Be sure all your home's vents are at least partially open.

Proper tree planting in right-of-way areas

The wrong species of tree growing in the wrong place can lead to a lifetime of visits from a NOVEC tree trimming crew. The cumulative effect of this tree trimming is that it adds millions of dollars annually to the cost of providing you with electricity. Tree trimming along our overhead utility easements is one of the largest maintenance expenses NOVEC or any utility typically incurs.

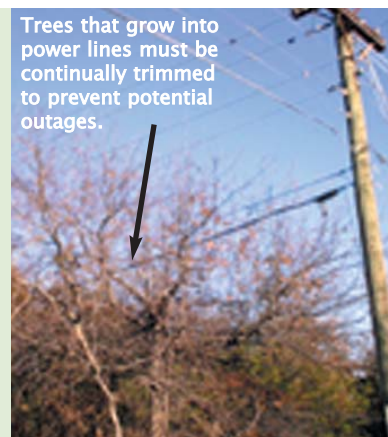
NOVEC removes all tall growing trees from the utility easements when new lines are installed so the only trees left to trim are those growing into the right of way from outside the easement edge. However, hundreds of new trees are added that must be trimmed due to customers not recognizing the mature size of trees they plant near overhead lines.

In an effort to control tree-trimming costs and maintain more aesthetically pleasing and safer right-of-way areas, NOVEC does not allow trees which have a mature height over 20 feet to be planted in an overhead utility easement. If

discovered by our right-of-way contractors, these trees will be removed along with any "wild" brush trees which have sprouted since the previous trimming cycle.

As warm weather approaches, please be aware of nearby power lines before planting trees in your yard. For additional information, visit www.novec.com, click on "Services" and then "Right of Way." Or contact the right-of-way department at (703) 392-1661 or (888) 335-0500, extension 1661. You can also consult the Virginia Cooperative Extension Office Web site at www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/trees/430-029/430-029.html.

Trees that grow into power lines must be continually trimmed to prevent potential outages.



NOVEC
The Powerful Choice



What's Current is produced by the NOVEC Public Relations Department for Cooperative customers. If you would like additional information or if you have suggestions for future articles, please contact: NOVEC PR, P.O. Box 2710, Manassas, VA 20108 or send e-mail to: ssmarrelli@novec.com.