

Co-op Coalition Survey: Air Conditioning Turn-on Dates (4-2020)

Thanks to everyone who responded. As one respondent wrote: Dealing with heating and air conditioning with a 2-pipe system “is an art.”

 In a message dated: Wed, Apr 8, 2020 10:23 am

If your co-op provides air conditioning and must mechanically convert between heat and A/C and back again (commonly referred to as a 2-pipe HVAC system), you can help another Coalition member. Their question is below. Please respond by 5pm, Friday, April 17.

FYI - Information about DC's heating requirements can be found at : <https://dcra.dc.gov/service/district-columbia-heating-regulations> There are no requirements for air conditioning. In short, DC requires heat be maintained at a temperature of at least 68° F between October 1 and May 1.

Our co-op has been having a pretty heated (yes pun intended) email conversation among our shareholders about when we should switch from heat to AC. Because the temperature varies a good deal depending on what direction your unit faces and what floor you are on it is difficult to satisfy everyone.

How do other co-ops handle this transition? Do they use specific dates regardless of temperatures, wait until there are X numbers of days over X degrees, or use some other metric? It would help us out immensely if we had some input from other coops. Thanks!

DC Cooperative Housing Coalition
www.CoopsDC.org

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<50 units	We only provide heat (not a/c) but every year we have one or two residents complain about the boiler not being turned on soon enough or being turned off too soon. Our policy is to turn on the heat some time between October 15 and 22 and to turn it off some time between April 15 and 22. We try to look at the extended forecast and choose the right day and hope for the best. Because of the way heat is distributed throughout the building (boiler/radiators), it's impossible to have the ideal temperature in every unit: especially in early fall and late spring, some units are too hot and others are too cold no matter what we do.
<50 units	[Our co-op] does not have central AC for the building. Individual owners have their own window units.
<50 units	Yes, we have a hot/cold water-pipe based system here, and while we're hoping to only have to do one more summer with it, the dates of the switchover are always contentious, which is one of many reasons we're looking to finance and install a new VRF system that individual owners can make their own temperature choices on. Many owners have, in fact, never used the heat and only very rarely closed their windows when the heat is on, but we still try to maintain the heat on when the forecast is for overnight lows in the 40s F or lower. So, we were scheduled to start the switchover this Friday, but we've delayed as it's supposed to be quite cold this coming weekend. The switch happens sometime between October 1 and November 15 in the fall and April 1 and May 1 in the spring, but each time it's contentious, pitting owners on lower floors who use heat to stay warm against owners on upper floors who do not ever use heat or find the heat being on comfortable in their units.

<50 units	We do not have central a/c. We follow the DC date guidelines to turn the boiler on and off for the season. I have been watching the overnight low temperatures with an eye toward turning the boiler off early, knowing that I can easily turn it back on and have the heat back up in a few hours.
<50 units	We don't have explicit guidelines. We do leave the heating system for a while on after we kick in the AC, to allow us to use either, depending on the temperature.
<50 units	We don't have central air for the building, so it's up to individual members when to turn on their unit's A/C.
50 – 99 units	Our building is older so we only offer heat, however, we turn the steam boiler off on May 15th every year. Of course we receive complaints that units facing the sun get too warm and we should turn it off sooner, but this has been our buildings standard.
50 – 99 units	Although we don't have a fixed date for switching from AC to heat, when daytime temperatures are generally in the 50's-60's and nighttime temperatures are in the mid-40's we switch off the heat. The AC is usually turned on about a week or two later when daytime temperatures are in the 70's. The south and west sides of our building are in the direct sunlight and heat up quickly. DC law requires heat to be provided by Oct. 15, but in 2018 it was 80 degrees on Oct. 15 and not much cooler last year. We turned on the heat the following week. This process is an art, not a science, and there is always about a week during the spring and again in the autumn when some residents are either too hot or too cold.
100 – 299 units	<i>-No Responses-</i>
300+ units	We don't have this exact situation. The heat in our building is available all year. We only have to turn on the building air conditioning and fill the cooling tower when the weather starts to warm up. Our management company starts looking at weather forecasts and will begin the process when the temperatures look like they'll be above 70 degrees for more than a day or two.
300+ units	Our target date is normally May 15th. If we have an early heatwave, we consider switching over earlier.
300+ units	The two pipe system is taxing as noted in the member's omments. However, we understand the District states a/c must be ready by May 15 th of each year. We have interpreted it does not mean "on" particularly if we have a late winter. We do, however, historically turn the temperatures (heat) down during the day and allow heat in the system at night when the temperatures may drop. In reverse during the need for heat. Always a tough call.
300+ units	We have a '2 pipe system'. There's no 'right' answer... there will always be a few residents that want AC at first hi temp; others say wait. Suggest: follow advice of property manager and/or building engineer. At a minimum, it takes a week to convert from heat to AC no matter. We always schedule repairs starting May 1st so the heat is turned off then; depending on repair progress, AC may come on early or NLT May 15th.
300+ units	During this unusually warm spring, [our co-op] raised the heating temperature to offset the conversion and that was helpful. Unfortunately, though, Mother Nature is hard to predict. Today's weather forecast is for temperatures to raise to 80 degrees and sunny. Yet, this weekend, the forecast will take the temperatures back into the 30s. The heat here will need to be maintained until the temperatures make a more steady and consistent rise.