



Birmingham Heating & Air Conditioning

Heating and cooling in the heart of Shelby County.

FIELD GUIDE · BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Shelby County HVAC Maintenance Calendar

A month-by-month playbook for keeping your AC and heat running across Alabama's longest cooling season.

Who this is for: Homeowners in Helena, Chelsea, Pelham, Alabaster, Calera, and the rest of Shelby County who don't want to be the family without AC in mid-July.

What's inside: 12-month checklist, filter sizing notes, the two things you should never DIY, when to schedule a tune-up before the rush, and one chart that tells you when your unit is past saving.

Service area: Shelby County, Alabama — Helena, Chelsea, Calera, Pelham, Alabaster, Hoover

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Why a Calendar Beats a Reminder

Most homeowners think about HVAC twice a year — once when it gets hot, once when it gets cold. That's exactly when every contractor in Shelby County is booked solid. The cheapest, fastest service is the maintenance you do in March and October when nobody else is calling. That's the whole point of this calendar.

January

Coldest month of the year in Helena and Pelham. Your heat is working hard. Two things to do:

- Change the filter — a clogged filter in January doubles your heat strip runtime and your power bill
- Listen to your system at startup. A loud "thump" or a delayed click means a relay is wearing out. Get it diagnosed before it dies on the coldest morning
- Check that all supply registers are open. Closed registers force back-pressure into the blower and stress the motor

February

Still cold. Last full month of heating before pollen season starts in Birmingham.

- Replace filter again (yes, monthly during heavy use)
- If you have a heat pump, watch for ice on the outdoor coil. Light frost is normal; a solid block of ice means defrost is failing
- Schedule your spring AC tune-up now. April is too late — every reputable contractor in Shelby County is booked by April 1

March

Pollen explodes. Yellow film on the car means yellow film on your outdoor condenser coil. This is the most important maintenance month of the year.

- Rinse the outdoor condenser with a garden hose — top-down, gentle pressure. Never a pressure washer (it bends the fins)
- Replace filter (pollen month — change every 3 weeks if you have allergies)
- Get your spring tune-up done. Refrigerant check, capacitor test, blower amp draw. This is the single highest-ROI service call you make all year

April

First warm days. Test your AC before you need it.

- Run the AC for 30 minutes on a 70-degree day. If it doesn't cool to 68-70 inside, something is off — call now while contractors are still available
- Replace filter
- Inspect ductwork in attic if accessible. Look for tape lifting, joints separating, or daylight where there shouldn't be any

May

Last calm month before the heat hammer drops.

- Replace filter
- Clear 2 feet of space around the outdoor unit — pull weeds, trim mulch, move trash cans
- Test the condensate drain line. Pour a cup of water in the drain pan; if it doesn't drain in 30 seconds, the line is partially clogged. Flush with bleach now or pay for a flooded ceiling in August

June

Real heat starts. Your AC will run 12-18 hours a day. Every weak component will reveal itself.

- Replace filter (monthly through October)
- Listen for the AC to short-cycle (turn on and off rapidly). Short-cycling = a problem, not a feature
- If your power bill jumps 30%+ without lifestyle changes, refrigerant is low or a capacitor is failing

July

Brutal. AC runtime peaks. This is when 80% of all Birmingham-metro HVAC failures happen.

- Replace filter
- Don't set the thermostat below 72°F — every degree below that doubles strain on the compressor for almost no gain in comfort
- Check that the outdoor unit isn't buried in overgrown grass or vines. Airflow restriction = system damage

August

Hottest month on average. If you've made it this far without a call, your system is in good shape.

- Replace filter
- Inspect the inside coil drain line one more time — late-August storms cause backups
- If your home humidity stays above 60%, you have an oversized AC or a thermostat-only-controlled system. Talk to a tech about a dehumidifier or variable-speed upgrade

September

Heat starts to ease but Birmingham can still hit 95° into October. Don't put away the AC playbook yet.

- Replace filter
- Get your fall tune-up scheduled now if you haven't. October calendars fill up fast
- Inspect the heat-side ignitor (gas furnace) or reversing valve (heat pump). One quick service call now prevents a no-heat morning in November

October

Transition month. Both AC and heat run on different days. Best month for service.

- Replace filter
- Do a 1-hour heat run test. Watch for any unfamiliar smell (dust burning off is normal the first time; gas or chemical smell is not)
- Insulation check — if your attic is under R-30, fix that before heating season. Cheaper than upgrading the furnace

November

Heat starts running real hours. Birmingham's first cold snap usually hits the second week of November.

- Replace filter
- Open all supply registers — even in rooms you don't use. Closed registers raise duct static pressure and stress the blower
- Check carbon monoxide detector batteries. Non-negotiable if you have a gas furnace

December

Cold settles in. Heating runtime peaks.

- Replace filter
- Watch the outdoor heat pump (if applicable) — it should cycle into defrost every 30-90 min in freezing weather
- Plan ahead — if your unit is 12+ years old and you've had two service calls this year, start budgeting for replacement before next summer

The "Stop Ignoring It" List

Five things people in Shelby County put off too long. Each one turns a \$200 service call into a \$2,000+ replacement:

- A weak capacitor (causes hard starts, kills compressors)
- A slow refrigerant leak (causes coil freeze-up, blower damage, then compressor death)
- A partially clogged drain line (causes water damage to ceiling drywall)
- A failing contactor (causes burning smell, electrical damage)
- A blown safety switch that someone bypassed (causes fire risk — non-negotiable, fix immediately)

When to Stop Repairing and Replace

The honest math for Shelby County homeowners: if your unit is 12+ years old AND a single repair is over \$1,500 AND you've had 2+ service calls in the last 24 months — replace. Otherwise repair. Run that test before you spend a dollar. New 16-SEER systems pay for themselves in 6-8 years on August power bills alone.

About Birmingham Heating & Air Conditioning

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Shelby County, Alabama — Helena, Chelsea, Calera, Pelham, Alabaster, Hoover

This guide was written by working HVAC techs, not marketing teams. Direct, honest, practical. Real Alabama numbers, real local context, no guarantees we can't back up.

If something in here saved you a service call — or saved you from a bad one — share it with a neighbor. That's the whole point.

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Phone: (205) 649-4480

Web: birminghamheatingandairconditioning.com

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