



— FIND THE —  
**COMMERCIAL**  
**HVAC COMPANY**  
*YOU CAN COUNT ON*

# Looking For A Good HVAC Contractor? Here's What You Need to Know

In today's Southern California marketplace, energy efficient, high performance commercial HVAC is not only a "must have" for your customers or tenants to experience, but also a key element of a productive workplace for your employees throughout the year. And with recent technology breakthroughs, there's never been a better time to streamline your system to keep costs low.

What were once "pie in the sky" green energy innovations have now become affordable upgrades or retrofits for any system.

Coupled with implementation of best-practices maintenance, you can now save real money when it comes to the heating and air conditioning for your commercial building. Even if you're looking at a total replacement of HVAC equipment that is ten years or older, you're still going to ultimately have more energy efficient heating and air conditioning that costs less to run, while heating and cooling far better than the system it replaces.



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## That's great, you say. But who the heck is going to do the work?

As Southern Californians ourselves, we know you have a lot of choices when it comes to hiring HVAC contractors. Indeed, it seems everyone's brother or buddy or neighbor down the street has a hand in one of the fastest growing industries in the United States. But know this first: HVAC contractors are not created equally. There is a huge range of competence, quality and indeed, legality to the world of heating and air conditioning. Being aware of what is at stake, not to mention the issues involved, is good information to have as you choose an HVAC company to maintain one of your biggest operational investments as a commercial building owner.

## Licensure and Insurance.

This is a biggie, and one that far too many HVAC companies skimp on behind the scenes. Frankly, no matter how profitable your business, you can't afford not to hire a fully licensed, and insured contractor at your commercial building, period. The California heating and air conditioning industry is regulated by the Contractors State License Board or CSLB. They require at minimum four years of journeyman level, boots-on-the-ground experience for all license holders, or a combination of HVAC classroom time and this experience. Either way, it's a significant investment of time and money for the contractor, yielding invaluable knowledge and situational awareness that just a quick how-to brochure cannot provide.



Obviously, as the CSLB recognizes, these practical skills take time to acquire. When it comes to this California licensure, how long can you tell if a contractor has been in the trade? It turns out this is a simple one to answer.



California issues these state license numbers sequentially. Air-Tro's license (#258228) was issued in 1969; licenses issued today are seven digits long. Someone with a higher numbered license is new to the game. And an interesting footnote? Air-Tro's experience even predates its first contractor's license in 1969. Company owners Bob and Tony Helbing are fourth generation contractors. In fact, their family experience in the trades goes back to the 19th century!

In addition to this qualification, there are further licenses and competencies your HVAC contractor should also have. The North American Technician Excellence (known popularly as NATE) nonprofit certification provides an additional layer of trust.

As an organization spokesperson explains, "NATE is the nation's largest nonprofit certification organization for heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration (HVACR) technicians. NATE tests represent real-world working knowledge of HVACR systems and validate the professional competency of service and installation technicians. Contractors, manufacturers, distributors and educators across the industry partner with NATE to develop knowledgeable, competent HVACR technicians. Home and business owners choose HVACR contractors who employ NATE-certified technicians to get repairs done right – the first time."



License #	Year Issued
100,000	1946
200,000	1960
300,000	1974
400,000	1980
500,000	1986
600,000	1990
700,000	1994
800,000	2001
900,000	2007
1,000,000	2015



Home and business owners choose NATE-certified technicians to get repairs done right – the first time.

Indeed, Air-Tro is NATE certified. But we don't stop there. Along with NATE, we have been awarded the Contractor of the Year award from the Air Conditioning Contractors Association. Air-Tro is also a member of the Air Conditioning Contractors of America.

Our CEO Bob Helbing is a former President of the Institute of Heating and Air Conditioning Industries here in Southern California, and Air-Tro is a founding member of the Excellence Management Information Exchange Group, involving semiannual peer reviews of member HVAC contractors. This means every single service call and installation is followed up after the fact for customer experience and satisfaction, with the results used to improve future performance.

Obviously, Air-Tro holds the state-required C20 HVAC license. But to guarantee we can handle any job site contingencies, we also hold a C10 Electrical license, a C36 Plumbing license, a C38 Refrigeration license and a B General contractor license.

In addition to meeting state credential requirements, we make sure each of our service technicians and install team leaders holds an EPA Section 608 Refrigerant certificate as well.



Finally, every employee receives a drug screen and criminal background check before they begin employment.



## Customer Reviews and Community Service

As we've explained above, when it comes to hiring a great heating and air conditioning contractor, the right acronyms are important. Indeed, we like to think at Air-Tro we've taken that kind of training and recognition to a new level in order to provide our customers with a high level of trust and confidence in our services. But the decision to choose an HVAC contractor should go beyond considering "just" their training and experience. What role does your heating and air conditioning company play in your community? Are you hiring a new franchise, here to make a buck and move on? Or have they truly identified with the people and towns they serve, demonstrating a commitment that goes beyond just the day-to-day?

Well, we probably don't need to remind you of the more than 300 Google reviews Air-Tro has received over the years, with an average 4.7 star ranking. Nor do we propose to toot our own horn by mentioning that Air-Tro has been the recipient of the Readers Choice Awards from the Pasadena Star News, San Gabriel Tribune, Monrovia Weekly, Arcadia Weekly and Los Angeles Times. No, that might be showing off and we don't do that here at Air-Tro. But If you hear something about it from our loyal spouses, friends and neighbors, don't be too hard on them. Their hearts are certainly in the right place!

But awards aside, we all know what matters most when hiring a qualified HVAC company aren't the accolades, but the people. The employees at Air-Tro have consistently demonstrated not just expertise in their field, but a dedication to others that goes far beyond the limits of 9-5.







## 2021 Neighbors Helping Neighbors Business Award Air-Tro, Inc.



We're proud of our team members who donated their time and trucks to deliver food and other vital products to the less fortunate through Foothill Family Services. We were thrilled to accept their Golden Plate Award 2021 for working to provide our community with food, and other essentials during the worst of the pandemic.

We're also proud to support local nonprofit organizations like the Plymouth Parent-Teacher Association, a PTA volunteer group who work together to enrich and engage families in the Title 1 Plymouth Elementary School in Monrovia, California, as well as the Monrovia Fine Arts Association, The People Concern and their Cloverfield Services Center in Santa Monica, and many other organizations.

Air-Tro also is delighted to provide heating and air conditioning services to local landmarks and important institutions like the San Gabriel Mission, USC, Occidental College, the Wrigley Mansion, Pasadena City Hall, the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels and of course the Institute of Heating and Air Conditioning in beautiful Glendale.











At the end of the day, when it comes to hiring an HVAC contractor, no company is worth more than its individual employees, from the receptionist answering the phone, to the technician servicing your commercial furnace, to the manager making scheduling decisions about whom to send on what project. And in that department, we're confident that Air-Tro is the choice that stands far and above all the others here in the Southland. That's because we strive to be people who care not only about the quality of the work we provide but also about the communities in which we live. Quite simply, it's what we do here at Air-Tro.

## And that is service you can count on.



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Robert Helbing, PE, is President of Air-Tro Heating and Air Conditioning Company. He is a Caltech-degreed aeronautical engineer (yes – a rocket scientist!), as well as a 4th generation contractor and 3rd generation engineer. He is a past-president of the Institute of Heating and Air Conditioning Industries (IHACI); Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) Contractor of the Year, 2011; and a 15-year member of Excellence Alliance Industries, a membership organization committed to the development and improvement of HVACR companies nationwide. Bob is also a founding member and past committee chair for the Western HVAC Performance Alliance, a council of stakeholders in the Energy industry which includes utilities, regulators, manufacturers and contractors. He currently serves on two committees for the WHPA: Commercial Quality Installation and the Existing Buildings Energy Efficiency. He can be reached at 626.357.3535 and [bobhelbing@airtro.com](mailto:bobhelbing@airtro.com).

For more information, visit our commercial section on the web at **[airtro.com/commercial](http://airtro.com/commercial)**

