VANCOUVER HVAC PRO

Repair & Troubleshooting

No heat, short cycling, strange noises, frozen outdoor units, ignition faults and what an HVAC service call should find

4 Expert Answers from HVAC IQ

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Q1

Could a tripped breaker stop my heat pump from working in the Tri-Cities?

A tripped breaker is one of the most common reasons a heat pump goes completely silent, and yes, it absolutely applies in Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody just as anywhere else in Metro Vancouver. Before calling a contractor, check your electrical panel for a breaker that has flipped to the middle or off position, reset it once, and see if the unit restarts normally.

Why a Heat Pump Can Trip a Breaker

Heat pumps draw a significant surge of current at startup, especially during defrost cycles, which happen frequently in the Tri-Cities' wet, near-freezing winters. A few things can push that draw over the breaker's rating: a failing capacitor, a refrigerant pressure issue, a dirty air filter restricting airflow, or a compressor that is beginning to wear. If the breaker trips again within a short time after you reset it, stop resetting it. A breaker that keeps tripping is protecting you from an overload or a short, and forcing it back on repeatedly can damage the compressor or wiring.

Also check whether the outdoor disconnect box near the unit has been switched off, either accidentally or by a previous technician who forgot to restore it. That is a separate shutoff from the panel breaker and is easy to overlook.

One more thing specific to heat pumps: many systems have two breakers, one for the outdoor compressor and one for the air handler or fan coil inside. If only one has tripped, the indoor unit might still show signs of life on the thermostat while the outdoor unit sits completely still, or vice versa. Check both.

If the breaker is hot to the touch, smells burnt, or will not stay reset, do not attempt further resets. That points to a wiring or panel fault that needs a licensed electrician, not just an HVAC technician.

For the electrical permit side: Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody are not among the municipalities that issue their own electrical permits, so any electrical repair work on the heat pump circuit in the Tri-Cities falls under Technical Safety BC's jurisdiction. A contractor doing that work needs to pull the permit through Technical Safety BC, not the city hall.

On the HVAC side, if the breaker reset does not solve it and a technician needs to open the refrigerant circuit, that work must be done by someone approved under BC's Ozone Depleting Substances and Other Halocarbons Regulation. A diagnostic service call in Metro Vancouver typically runs $120 to $250, and a repair on top of that depends entirely on what failed.

A good question to ask any contractor before they start: "Will you pull a Technical Safety BC electrical permit if any wiring on the heat pump circuit needs to be touched, and are you certified to handle refrigerant?" If the answer to either is vague, keep looking. Vancouver HVAC Pro can pass your details along to local Tri-Cities HVAC

contractors if you want a few names to call.

Q2

My furnace won't ignite after a power outage in Surrey, what now?

Most furnaces will restart on their own after a power outage, but a few simple checks can get yours going before you call anyone.

Start with the basics. Make sure the power is fully restored and the furnace switch (usually a wall switch near the unit that looks like a light switch) is in the ON position. Check your electrical panel for a tripped breaker on the furnace circuit, and reset it once if needed. Then check the thermostat: confirm it is set to HEAT, the temperature is set above the current room temperature, and the batteries are fresh. A dead thermostat battery is a surprisingly common cause of a no-heat call.

Next, look at the furnace itself. Most modern high-efficiency furnaces have a small LED light on the control board that flashes a fault code. Count the flashes and check the legend on the inside of the furnace door; a lockout code often means the igniter tried several times, failed and shut down for safety. Many furnaces will reset if you turn the power switch off for 30 seconds and back on. Try that once.

Also check the furnace filter. A clogged filter can trigger a high-limit safety switch that prevents ignition. If the filter is grey and dense, replace it before you reset the unit.

If None of That Works

A power surge during an outage can damage the control board, the inducer motor or the igniter itself. Igniters are fragile ceramic components that crack easily, and a surge is enough to do it. Repairs for a failed igniter typically run $250 to $500 in Metro Vancouver; a control board replacement can reach $600 to $900 or more, depending on the furnace model and age.

If the furnace is more than 15 to 18 years old and the repair cost is approaching $1,000, it is worth getting a replacement quote at the same time. A high-efficiency gas furnace replacement in Metro Vancouver runs roughly $5,500 to $11,000 installed, which includes the new unit, venting, labour and permits.

Speaking of permits: any gas work on a furnace in Surrey requires a permit from Technical Safety BC, not the City. The contractor you hire must be licensed as a gas contractor with Technical Safety BC; confirm that licence number before anyone touches the gas line or burner assembly.

One safety note: if you smell gas at any point, do not reset anything. Leave the building immediately and call emergency services from outside.

For the repair itself, a proper written quote should spell out the diagnosed fault, the exact part being replaced, the labour rate, whether the permit fee is included, and the warranty on both parts and labour. Ask specifically whether WorkSafeBC coverage is in place. Once you have that in writing from two or three contractors, you are in a much better position to decide whether to repair or replace.

Local HVAC contractors can be matched to your Surrey address for free through Vancouver HVAC Pro, so you can have those written quotes in hand quickly.

Q3

My heat pump is making a grinding noise, is it safe to run in Langley?

A grinding noise from a heat pump is a warning sign you should not ignore, and running it continuously risks turning a repair into a full replacement.

What a Grinding Noise Usually Means

The most common causes are a failing fan motor bearing, a loose or damaged fan blade contacting the housing, or debris (a stick, a pine cone, gravel kicked up by a mower) caught in the outdoor unit. Less often, the compressor itself is the source, and that is the expensive scenario. The distinction matters: a fan motor repair typically runs $400 to $900 in Metro Vancouver, while a compressor failure on an older unit often makes replacement the more sensible choice, given that a new ductless or ducted system runs $4,500 to $18,000 or more depending on your setup.

Turn the unit off at the thermostat and the disconnect switch until a technician has a look. Running a heat pump with a seized bearing or a blade striking the housing can damage the compressor, burn out the motor windings, or in the case of debris, puncture a refrigerant line. None of those outcomes are cheap.

While the unit is off, walk around the outdoor section and check whether anything obvious is lodged near the fan. Clearing a leaf or twig is a safe homeowner task. Do not reach into the unit with power on, and do not attempt to spin the fan blade by hand to diagnose it; that is a job for a technician with the disconnect pulled.

A note on refrigerant: if the noise is accompanied by hissing, ice buildup on the lines, or a sudden drop in heating performance, there may be a refrigerant leak involved. Only a person certified under BC's Ozone Depleting Substances and Other Halocarbons Regulation may handle refrigerant, so this is firmly in contractor territory.

For the permit side: if the repair involves replacing a refrigerant-containing component or doing any electrical work on the unit's dedicated circuit, the electrical permit in Langley comes from Technical Safety BC, not the municipality. A straightforward fan motor swap typically does not trigger a new permit, but your contractor will know what applies to the specific repair.

When you call for service, ask the technician to do a full inspection while they are there, not just fix the immediate noise. Langley's wet winters are hard on outdoor units, and a bearing that has started to grind has usually been running rough for a while. A diagnostic visit runs roughly $120 to $250, and most contractors apply that toward the repair if you proceed.

Honestly, a grinding heat pump is the kind of thing you want looked at this week, not next month. If you would like, Vancouver HVAC Pro can connect you with a local Langley HVAC technician who can get eyes on it quickly.

Q4

Are my baseboard heaters and heat pump fighting each other in Surrey?

Baseboard heaters and a heat pump can absolutely work against each other if they are not set up to cooperate, and it is one of the more common efficiency complaints in Metro Vancouver homes that have added a mini-split to an electrically heated space.

What "fighting" actually looks like

The heat pump brings a room to temperature efficiently, but if the baseboard thermostat in the same room is set at or above the heat pump's target, the baseboard kicks in simultaneously or immediately after the heat pump cycles off. You end up paying for resistance heat at roughly three times the operating cost of the heat pump, which defeats the purpose entirely. The reverse can also happen in cooling mode: the heat pump cools the space while a baseboard thermostat senses a drop and calls for heat.

The fix is straightforward in principle. Set every baseboard thermostat in rooms served by the heat pump at least 2°C to 3°C below the mini-split's set point. The baseboard then acts as a true backup, only coming on if the heat pump cannot keep up during a cold snap, which in Surrey typically means nights below about -5°C to -8°C. For most of the heating season, the baseboards should stay silent.

If you have a multi-zone mini-split covering several rooms, go through each room and dial the baseboard thermostat down. A common mistake is leaving one thermostat at its original setting and wondering why the hydro bill barely moved after the heat pump install.

The bigger efficiency gain comes from not running both systems at the same target temperature at the same time. That single adjustment can cut your resistance heat use dramatically without any new equipment.

For a more permanent solution, some homeowners replace the baseboard thermostats with smart or programmable models set to a fixed low setback, or have an electrician wire the baseboards to a central controller that locks them out whenever the heat pump is running. That work requires an electrical permit in Surrey, which Surrey issues itself, so a licensed electrician pulls it locally rather than through Technical Safety BC.

If the heat pump is struggling to hold temperature on mild days (above 5°C is well within Surrey's normal winter range), the issue may be sizing or a refrigerant charge problem rather than the thermostat conflict. A service call in the $120 to $250 range is worth it to have a certified technician check the system before assuming you need more heat.

One other thing worth checking: if your heat pump is a cooling-only air conditioner rather than a true heat pump, it cannot contribute to heating at all, and the baseboards are doing all the work by default. A heat pump runs in both

directions; confirm yours has a heating mode if you have not already.

Most Surrey homes fix this with thermostat settings alone, and a local technician can confirm that in one visit; Vancouver HVAC Pro can send your request to one.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Vancouver HVAC Pro. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local permit authority (your municipality or Technical Safety BC) before starting any heating, cooling or gas project. Information is current as of November 8, 2026 and may change. Visit **vancouverhvacpro.com** for the latest answers.