

Flow Masters Plumbing Details How HVAC Zoning Systems Handle Uneven Room Temperatures Before Winter

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SAN FRANCISCO, CA - November 19, 2026 -
Flow Masters Plumbing is explaining what San Francisco homeowners should know about HVAC zoning systems as colder weather begins. When one room stays cold, homeowners may suspect a furnace blowing cold air, although uneven distribution of heated air through the home's ducts can also cause the problem.

HVAC zoning systems divide a home into areas that each get their own temperature setting. In a home with ducts, motorized dampers (movable plates inside the ductwork) send air from one central unit to the zones that need it. Each zone needs its own thermostat or temperature sensor, according to the California Energy Commission's 2025 single-family residential compliance manual.

The manual describes two-story homes as a common example of where zoning a single forced-air system can help address uneven temperatures. Warm air can rise toward upper floors, leaving lower floors cooler. Poor duct design can worsen this imbalance, according to the manual.

The manual also notes that zoning is primarily intended to improve comfort rather than reduce energy use. Closing a zone damper restricts airflow and can increase duct pressure. Designers must account for these effects to maintain proper airflow through the equipment. Two separate systems, one per zone, avoid that pressure problem because neither uses zone dampers.

The city's Department of Public Health says local buildings were largely designed for cool coastal temperatures. Census Bureau data show that about 45% of homes in the San Francisco metro area had air conditioning in 2021, the lowest share among the 15 largest metros.

The air-conditioning statistic does not show whether individual homes have ductwork. A suitable zoning approach depends on each home's existing equipment, duct layout, and heating needs.

For homes without ducts, ductless mini-split heat pumps offer a different approach to zoning. The U.S. Department of Energy's Building America Solution Center describes them as a popular choice for homes using electric baseboard heaters. Each indoor unit provides temperature control for its zone without duct dampers, while a multi-split system connects several indoor units to one outdoor unit.

The guide says oversized or poorly placed indoor units can switch on and off too often, wasting energy. It recommends load calculations to estimate each zone's heating and cooling needs and the total load.

Rooms without indoor units may become uncomfortable. Small air transfer fans can help move conditioned air from nearby zones into those rooms. A return path also allows air to circulate back to the room with the indoor unit.

Zoning is one option, but not every cold room requires it. Flow Masters Plumbing says poorly designed ducts or improperly balanced airflow can leave rooms cold, while inadequate insulation can increase heat loss. Airflow balancing adjusts how much conditioned air reaches each room. Identifying the cause first helps determine whether zoning, balancing, or insulation work is appropriate.

According to the center's guide, many wall-mounted ductless units sense temperature near the top of the wall, where warm air collects, so air at head level can be colder than the thermostat setting. A technician can assess whether thermostat placement or temperature settings need adjustment to improve comfort.

Flow Masters Plumbing works with homeowners on plumbing and heating needs. Its heating services include ductless mini-split systems, radiant floor heating, and thermostat installation and repair.

The company says its radiant floor heating work includes balancing tubing loops that circulate heated water

to address cold spots in certain areas of a floor. Unlike duct balancing, those adjustments affect water circulation rather than airflow.

Alan Moran co-founded Flow Masters Plumbing in 2011. The company operates two offices, including one in San Francisco, and reports more than a decade of experience with heating and cooling systems. Moran leads installations, while the company hosts manufacturer-led training seminars to keep its team informed about new heating technologies.

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Flow Masters Plumbing

Our team provides drain cleaning, sewer line repair, tankless water heater installation, hydro jetting, backflow testing, emergency plumbing, trenchless sewer repairs, water leak detection, boiler installation and repair etc.

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