

Bellingham WA Home Inspection (King of the House) -- Loose Ducts

I cannot tell you how often, in the course of doing home inspections, I find heating, cooling, dryer and air-handling ducts that are disconnected. When, for example, a bathroom exhaust fan duct is loose in an attic or a substructure area, the problem can lead to high humidity and fungal issues. If, on the other hand, a heating or cooling duct is loose, the homeowner will be shelling-out serious money to pay the local utility for wasted energy.

The disconnected duct might be a metal duct.



Or it might be the newer, and popular, flex ducting.



Often, when ducting is disconnected, that is because someone made the original connections, at the joints, with duct tape.



While it might be called “duct tape”, duct tape is one of the worst products to use when securing ducts. Home Energy magazine said:

"Relying on duct tape as a structural joint fastener can allow ducts to come completely undone. Duct tape can "melt" from heat. Even when a joint doesn't come apart, duct tape can dry-out over time and lose its seal."

Here are some better alternatives:

With the modern flex ducts, a cinch connector, designed for the application, should be used as a means of connecting the ducting together. Then, to reduce sag, flex ducting must be supported with soft webbed nylon hanger straps – spaced approximately every 3 ft to 5 ft apart.

Metal ducts should be secured together by driving a single "short" sheet metal screw into each joint. Metal ducts, also, require suitable support. Hangers, such as webbed nylon straps, should be placed along the ducting -- spaced approximately every 3 ft to 6 ft apart.

Clothes dryer ducts are more problematic. Metal ducting is required for the application. But, the sections should not be fastened together with screws – the screws collect lint. Many appliance professionals suggest that installers should rely on long sections of metal ducting so there are fewer joints. The joints are best secured, one to another, with metal foil tape. Dryer ducting must be well secured and supported, see the guidelines above.

Air-handling ducts, other than the factory insulated flex ducting (center photo above), should be wrapped with insulation where they pass through unheated spaces. You can read more about insulating ductwork [here](#).

Thanks for stopping by,
Steven L. Smith