

# HOME XPERT

Simple ways to improve your home comfort, safety and value.

Summer 2009 \$3.00

## MY WORD

### Sweet Summertime

By Steven Heidler & Mick Heidler



Dear Friend,  
Things sure have changed since this time last year. That's when our eyes were bugging out every time we put gasoline in the tank. The numbers on the pump went so high that quick errands started to look like luxuries we couldn't afford.

Well, gas prices came down, fortunately – a silver lining in an economy gone haywire. Then the government stepped in, and we're hoping things will be better for all of us soon.

Now, before you get too tired of the words "economic stimulus," make sure you know how you can personally take advantage of the once-in-a-lifetime tax credit for energy-efficient home improvements.

For the first time ever, you can get a 30 percent tax credit of up to \$1,500 for the purchase of highly efficient water heaters and other large appliances. So if it's time for a replacement, you'll get an incredible "governmental" benefit if you act now.

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- Staying Fit in an Unfit Economy
- Beyond Sunscreen

## MONEY WISE

### Avoid Costly Plumbing Disasters

#### ▶ Low cost (or no cost) ways to prevent getting soaked

In any area of your home, you can follow this simple rule of thumb: emergencies are costly. While this is especially true for plumbing, the good news is that there are a lot of steps you can start taking now to prevent plumbing emergencies. Where do you get started? Our first stop is...

#### In the kitchen

- ◆ Don't clog the drain unnecessarily. For instance, avoid pouring fats and cooking oils down the drain. Instead, wipe congealed grease from pots and pans and dispose of it in the trash.
- ◆ Run cold water down the drain for about a half-minute before and after you use the garbage disposal to flush away remaining food scraps. Don't put carrots, celery, banana peels or other stringy foods in the garbage disposal.

#### In the bathroom

- ◆ Allow at least 15 minutes between showers in order to let the hot water return to a strong level (another option: call us about a larger capacity water heater.)

- ◆ Soak the showerhead in vinegar if pressure is weak. This may loosen mineral deposits that are clogging it.
- ◆ Use bathtub drain strainers to catch hair and soap residue that clog drain pipes.
- ◆ Use only toilet paper in the toilet. Facial tissue has stronger fibers that lead to clogged drains. And don't use the toilet as a garbage can. Also, small objects kept near the toilet often fall in and cause clogs.

#### To prevent water damage

- ◆ Check washing machine hoses regularly for signs of wear or a weak or loose connection.
- ◆ In case of emergency, know how to shut off your main water valve.
- ◆ If you will be out of your home for an extended period, shut off the main water valve to your house.

Finally, consider a routine maintenance plan. Plumbing emergencies are never convenient, but regular maintenance for plumbing and drains can help keep emergencies from occurring. Call us and ask about our regular maintenance plans.

**Your Quick Call Comfort Hotline:**

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## Get the Most Out of Your Next Backyard Bash

With summer finally bringing out the sun, many people are scrambling to spend as much time outdoors as they can. After all, there's not much that's more pleasant than an afternoon or evening spent with food, friends, basking in the summer sun. Here are a few things to consider before hitting the lawn and firing up the grill:

- **Arrange some activities for your guests.** When the great outdoors beckons, Monopoly just isn't going to cut it. Relaxed games such as horseshoes or badminton are popular fare for summer festivities – they aren't too competitive and won't leave your guests sweating up a storm.
- **Have outdoor lighting ready to go.** If everyone is still enjoying themselves when the sun sets, you won't want to see a good time come to end. Tiki torches or candles of varying sizes are popular for summer parties because they create a relaxing atmosphere while providing sufficient light – plus, they're great for themed parties like luaus.
- **Set aside a place for the pooches.** One of the things dog owners love most about outdoor parties is the chance to bring along man's best friend. However, since dogs aren't potty trained, it's a good idea for hosts to designate an area for pets before the party starts to avoid anyone's shoes getting an unwanted – and smelly – makeover.

## HOME WISE

### Stay Physically Fit in an Unfit Economy

In these tough economic times when every penny counts, costly gym memberships are a common casualty. But that doesn't mean you should neglect your health.

“More than ever, it's important to make exercise part of your daily routine,” says Don Brown, a well known fitness expert. “You can maintain health, lead an energetic lifestyle and reduce stress by getting regular exercise.”

The longtime fitness guru notes that physical health should not be sacrificed to cost-cutting measures.

Rather, Brown offers the following tips for those looking to stay, or get, physically fit:

#### Get outdoors

Walking and jogging are great cardiovascular activities especially for those new to regular exercise and they are free. What's more, getting out in the sunlight encourages healthy circulation, strengthens the body's immune system by increasing white blood cell count and helps improve mood.

On days when the weather isn't cooperative, take your cardio workout indoors. Jumping rope and running on a treadmill are great traditional indoor exercises.

#### Purchase at-home fitness equipment

Fitness fanatics are likely to want more from a workout than walking and jogging. At-home fitness equipment provides core-strengthening benefits similar to those you'd get from a gym plus the convenience of home.



#### Maintain a healthy diet

Those who like to dine out or frequently order in can save substantial amounts of money in the current economy simply by eating healthier and often far less expensive foods at home and by eating less. In conjunction with daily exercise, a balanced diet that includes multiple servings of fruits and vegetables is a great way to achieve or maintain optimal health, whether or not you ever enter a gym again.

## DID YOU KNOW

- The Kraft company produces enough Cool Whip, a brand of whipping cream, in one year to fill the entire Grand Canyon.
- Astronauts get taller when they are in space.
- Istanbul, Turkey is the only city in the world located on two continents.
- Approximately 10.5 gallons of water is used in a dishwasher. Washing the dishes by hand can use up to 20 gallons of water.
- The board game Scrabble was originally called “Criss Cross Words” by inventor Alfred Butts.
- The average four year-old child asks over four hundred questions a day.

## The Big Cover-up Sun Protection Goes Beyond Sunscreen

We all know that the sun is important – it's what stands between our planet and a permanent Ice Age. (For some reason, I don't think an *actual* Ice Age would be as fun as the movie – but, hey, I've been wrong before.) However, the negative effects of the sun, including its dangerous ultraviolet rays that contribute to sunburns and skin cancer make it a force to be reckoned with – especially in the strong rays of summer.

**Just how important is shielding yourself from the sun?**

Well, according to the American Cancer Society, skin cancer is the most common of all cancers. One million new cases are diagnosed each year, and one American dies every hour from skin cancer. The primary risk factor? Overexposure to UV rays – and the sun is the biggest culprit.

Most people know about the need for sun protection – especially applying sunscreen. But these efforts may not be enough. Dr. Mark Chamberlain, Doctor of Pharmacy at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, says: "Sunscreens don't prevent skin cancer, they can only reduce the risk. If time spent in the sun remains the same, a person with a 50 percent chance of developing skin cancer will reduce the risk to only 20 percent with daily use of sunscreen."

### Enjoy the Sun – Safely

For you and your family to enjoy fun in the sun, it's important to practice sun safety. And most dermatologists say protecting yourself and your family from the harmful rays of the sun is a multi-layered effort. That's why the

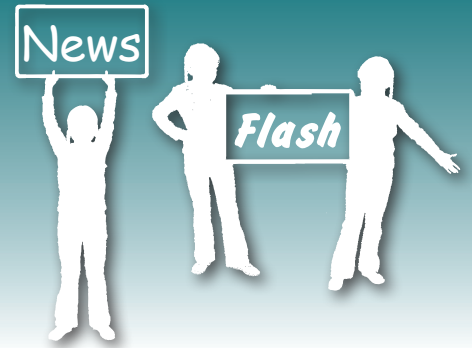
American Melanoma Foundation and the Skin Cancer Foundation suggest taking these precautions:

1. Avoid the sun during the hours of the strongest rays, which are between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
2. Wear a hat and sunglasses to protect both your eyes and face from the sun. Be sure your sunglasses offer both UVA and UVB protection, which should filter out at least 80 percent of the sun's rays.
3. Remember that ultraviolet rays can damage the skin even if it's cool outside, or if the sky is hazy or overcast. Take precaution.
4. Always use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or more. Apply sunscreen at least 15 minutes prior to going outdoors and reapply every two hours, especially during exercising or swimming. Don't forget to apply sunscreen to your ears and lips.
5. Children and the elderly should use extra caution in the sun, as their skin is delicate and more susceptible to sun damage. Sun exposure by these groups should be limited, and children 6 months and older should use sunscreen.

**...apply sunscreen at least 15 minutes prior to going outdoors...**

### "Quotable"

*"The summer night is like a perfection of thought."*  
—Wallace Stevens



## Cheap and Easy Ways to Better Your Bathroom

In the current economy, more and more homeowners are opting to renovate rather than move. And while a remodeling job might not be in your immediate future, you *can* make minor adjustments that make a room more appealing – and maybe even save you some money. Take, for example, the bathroom. These tips can serve as an upgrade that won't break the bank:

- **Replace the bathroom fan.** While all bathrooms are susceptible to mildew, an ineffective bathroom fan can make your problem even worse. Jot down your bathroom's square footage and then head to the local hardware store for a new fan that will suit your needs. Fans aren't expensive, and installation is often easy.
- **Fix the toilet.** Can't understand why your water bill is so high each month? It might be thanks to a defective flapper on your toilet. A new flapper is only a couple of dollars and will only take a minute or so to install. You can save even more with newer toilets that use less water.
- **Install new sink fixtures.** Older sink fixtures can make a bathroom appear dingy and antiquated. Replace your old handles and faucets with new ones to give your bathroom a more modern look.



## MY WORD (...from page 1)

This is also a good time to take good care of the system you have. If your plumbing needs a tune-up, give us a call, and we'll send a tech to inspect for leaks that are wasting water and wasting your money.

It's not rocket science to know that when you take care of your system, it's going to last a lot longer and perform a lot better than if

you just let it run until it runs down. That's why we offer an annual inspection to help identify small problems before they become big soggy messes.

In times like these, our homes become retreats from the cares of the world. Are you comfortable in yours? Call us when you need us.



Steven Heidler & Mick Heidler

P.S. If you know anyone else we can help, please pass along our name – and even this newsletter. We'll give your friends and family our best service and value.

### HomePoints

An ultra-low volume with a 6 liter flush saves 70% in flushed water and 30% of total indoor water use over an older 18 liter per flush model.

## Let Us Repair What Your Husband Fixed.

We know how it is. All you have to do is jiggle this, juggle that... and *voilà!* It's worse than before. A question crosses your mind: "Now what do I do?" The answer is simple. Call one of our trained professionals.

We'll help you out of your plumbing mess as quickly as possible. And we might even maintain a little peace (or pride) in the process. (No extra charge!) Just give us a call.

Heidler, Inc at 410-268-7191

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## Kabobs, Anyone?

Want a permanent solution to your propane problem?

Your plumber can connect your gas grill to your home's natural gas lines. No more fumbling around with heavy propane tanks or running out of gas. Call **Heidler, Inc at 410-268-7191** today.

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