

Future houses to be smart

THE HOME of tomorrow is coming — soon.

But visitors to the builders show can get a glimpse of futuristic technology and experience first-hand the benefits of the Smart House system in the interactive Smart Playhouse at the Detroit Edison exhibit.

Bille Steele, Detroit Edison builder liaison, said show goers will be able to walk through the four-room "Smart Playhouse" and familiarize themselves with the Smart House system.

"People will be able to go through and play with it, see exactly what we're trying to do," Steele said. "It brings the Jetsons to life. Things we used to see on cartoons, we can do today."

"In it (the Smart Playhouse) are the four most-used rooms in a house: the kitchen, living room, bedroom and home office," Steele said.

Each room will demonstrate specific applications appropriate for that room.

THE THREE most significant technological leaps in the Smart House are in energy management, safety and security, Steele said. Smart House system demonstrations will include control of the home security system, lighting, communications, energy management and various entertainment features.



Specifically, demonstrations will allow visitors to witness what Smart House will do in case of fire, watch as drapes open and close electronically, and learn how to assign switches to various light fixtures.

"You'll see everything work from outside grills, to speaker systems to lights," Steele said.

A further demonstration will show how a videotape playing in any VCR can be viewed on television in the house and how the same television can be switched over from viewing entertainment to monitoring a child in the bedroom.

Visitors will see how the Smart House system monitors energy rates and schedules appointments to work at the most efficient times during the day.

DESIGNERS OF the Smart House were aware many people are still uncomfortable with technology, so to encourage use of the systems, controls have been built around items already

common to most men and women, Steele said.

These controls include a video touch screen, touch tone phone, remote control, keypad and personal computer.

Perhaps even more exciting than the Smart Playhouse, however, is the advent of a fully functioning real Smart House, Steele said. Detroit Edison, Consumers Power and the National Association of Home Builders will choose a builder soon to construct a Smart House in southeast Michigan.

The first Smart House in Michigan is scheduled to be built in 1992.

"After the first is built and showcased for several months, it will be sold to an average homeowner. Then other builders will have an option to build other smart houses," Steele said.

A Smart House will appear much like the average house on the outside, Steele said, but its capabilities will be significantly different, thanks to an integrated wiring computer system.

UNLIKE THE conventional home which is wired with basic 120 volt copper wiring, the Smart House will include three different types of wires designed to carry power, video and communication signals.

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