

APPLIANCE DOCTOR

Keep appliances clean and healthy



JOE GAGNON

A month ago I was trying to figure out what I would write for you when the weather changed to the fall and winter season. I didn't think of it again until the first night in September when I turned the furnace on and it wouldn't operate.

It was just a week ago while playing golf with George Klempert of Family Heating, when he told me that the heating and air conditioning business had a banner year because of the extended heat wave this past summer. He told me the temperature was going to drop suddenly within a week and that his business wouldn't have the luxury this year of a few weeks' lull to restock their energy and give a few guys some time off. The reason stated by George was that most people never try the furnace until the day they need it.

His prediction couldn't have been more correct. I am a prime example of why his business and others are suddenly in dire need. We sometimes fail to prepare. Let us not have this happen with our major home appliances. You ladies out there, cut this checklist out of the paper and give your partner a honey-do list. These men just love me, don't you know.

■ **Refrigerator** — Clean the condenser underneath and in back and clean the drain pan underneath the refrigerator. Check the door seal using the flashlight trick and make sure the front is a half inch higher than the rear. Vaseline the hinge side door seal and clean the door seal with Bon Ami. Stop — there is a whole list of things you need to know about your refrigerator. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope No. 10 (check size) to the Observer & Eccentric with my name on it. I will send you a booklet on your refrigerator at your favorite price.

■ **Stove** — Time to put it into self clean and get it ready for Thanksgiving. Make sure all the elements are working on all positions. A few days before the big day make sure again that all is working OK. The hardest time to get quick service on your range is the day before a holiday.

■ **Dishwasher** — Time to give it the Tang powdered breakfast treatment. Make sure you turn the hot water faucet on to maximum temperature and turn on the dishwasher empty of dishes. Let it run four minutes and shut it off. Open the door and deposit the whole jar of Tang into the water. Shut the door, turn it on and let it go through the cycle. Check the racks for rust spots and repair them with the new material for such repairs available at your local appliance parts store.

■ **Garbage Disposal** — Fill it full of ice cubes and let it stand that way for a

least one hour. Then turn it on with cold water running for at least three minutes.

■ **Microwave Oven** — Fill a bowl of water and let it boil in the oven. Make sure that you use a bowl that won't break under boiling conditions. Remove the bowl and with paper towel and some Windex you can make the inside look like new. Make sure that the microwave does not have items placed on top and around it that might block any air circulation. Install a surge protector on the wall outlet available from your local hardware store.

■ **Clothes Dryer** — Make sure the vent line is clear and not filled with lint. Make sure it is the proper kind as recommended by the manufacturer, the government and the appliance doctor. In other words, it shouldn't be plastic and should be the old style metal type. If your dryer hasn't been taken apart in the past two years and cleaned, please do so and get some advice on how to do it. Clean the lint filter with soap and water, which will result in quicker drying times. Remove all materials around and above the dryer that might enhance a fire should one occur. Remember to open some windows and doors when you operate your dryer.

■ **Washer** — Adjust the water temperature hoses to where you get 100-degree water during the warm wash. Cold water to the house is colder in winter than in summer. Fill the machine on hot wash and add two gallons of white vinegar. Let it agitate for five minutes, shut it off and let stand quiet overnight. You will be surprised at how clean the inside will be. Check your fill hoses and if you see corrosion at the couplers, replace them. A ruptured hose can cause thousands of dollars worth of damage. We see it quite often in the service industry.

Your room air conditioner and/or dehumidifier should be taken to the local car wash and cleaned front, back and sides. Don't be shy with the hose and spray the blades out of it. Put it away for the winter and never plug it in while the unit is wet. Do this when customers aren't waiting in line to wash their cars.

These are some of the things you can do to prepare your appliances and save the cost of unnecessary repairs. If you have any specific questions you would like to ask, why don't you drop a note to the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers? I would be more than happy to answer any appliance question.

Joe Gagnon, the Appliance Doctor, will answer your questions about maintaining and repairing large appliances. Gagnon is president of Carmack Appliances in Garden City and does a weekly radio program on WJR-AM. He is author of "First Aid from the Appliance Doctor," available at area bookstores.

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