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Proper equipment makes job easier

Before the birds began to sing in the trees, homeowners already have their spring home-improvement projects planned. Whether it's replacing windows, reshingling the roof or installing new flooring, they're ready to take action as soon as the weather gets warm. Whether people are doing the work themselves or hiring professionals, proper planning is an important part of any home-improvement project. When hiring a contractor, people need to know exactly what they want done, so they can meet with professionals, explain the work and get realistic estimates. Do-it-yourselfers need to plan ahead to ensure they have set aside enough time for the project, have the right equipment and materials and understand the work that needs to be done.

Having the proper equipment means not only having the tools specifically designed for the task at hand but also having tools that are in good condition. It is a good idea for do-it-yourselfers to check that tools are in working order before beginning a project. All handles should be fixed firmly into the tool's working end, and jaw teeth, cutters and blades should be sharp. Any tools that are damaged should be thrown away.

If, when planning a project, do-it-yourselfers find that they don't have a tool they need, they can buy, rent or borrow it. Renting or borrowing allows them to see if they like a particular model or brand, making the decision easier when they finally decide to buy the tool. If people want to buy the tool many home-improvement professionals recommend going to a knowledgeable local dealer. While prices may not be as expensive as those in a catalog, do-it-yourselfers will be able to get a feel for the tool before buying.

After getting the proper equipment, people should follow the manufacturer's instructions when using each tool. Tools should be kept clean, dry and away from excessive heat. Before using a tool near electricity, people should shut off the current. They also should use steady pressure on jaws or cutters, instead of rocking the tool. If they are doing continuous work, it is a good idea to wear gloves or use comfort grips to help avoid getting blisters or calluses.

With the proper planning and right tools and materials, people are well on their way to a successful project and a more beautiful home.

New air conditioning uses natural gas fuel

Natural gas is a well-respected, cost-effective heating fuel. And now people throughout Michigan are being cooled with it.

Jan Wagner, a Shelby Township resident said, "When I had electric air conditioning in my old house I used to look for the surprise in the bill each month. But now with gas air conditioning, my bill is lower and much more consistent."

Today, clean-burning gas air conditioning is the most environmentally sensitive cooling technology available. It offers a two-to-one price advantage over electricity. In fact, according to Consumers Power, the average savings for 650 cooling hours-per-year with a four-ton gas cooling system over an electric cooling system can result in an operating savings of over \$200 annually. Plus, it uses no chlorofluorocarbons, hydrochlorofluorocarbons, or other chemicals that are harmful to the Earth's ozone layer.

How does it work? Natural gas cools your home using a time-tested, proven process of absorption. This process utilizes an ammonia/water solution instead of ozone-depleting freon used in electric air conditioners. The ammonia and the natural gas stay in the central unit outside your home.

In the outdoor unit, the solution is

boiled to separate the ammonia from the water. This ammonia gas is then condensed and turned into a liquid as it passes through the condenser section.

Next, the condensed liquid ammonia passes through a restrictor and into an evaporator while it chills the mixture and is circulated into a heat exchanger unit inside the furnace - similar to antifreeze in automobiles. From there, cool air is sent on its way throughout the house.

Besides being environmentally friendly and economical, cooling your home with natural gas central air conditioner has a number of advantages.

The system is reliable, quiet and easy to maintain. Other than a small pump and fan, there are only three moving parts to contend with - two-check valves and a diaphragm.

A natural gas air conditioner is built to last. A natural gas system can operate up to two times as long as a comparable electric unit.

Another important reason to consider equipping your home with a natural gas air conditioner is that it has been approved and tested by the American Gas Association.

Gas air conditioning - it really is low-cost, environmentally friendly way to stay cool this summer.

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