

HOME WORK

Invention helps stop flooding

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

The topic of water arises often in those columns and for good reason. It sustains life. When you get right down to it, it is really very inexpensive, especially when it is compared to gasoline.

There is a point, though, when water becomes a huge expense to an average homeowner. Let's look at a washing machine that has the same original rubber hoses, connected when the washer was installed 10 years ago. What kind of shape are those hoses in? Have you inspected them lately?

If those hoses are getting mushy when you squeeze them, maybe it's time to replace them. If the brass or silver-looking couplings near the ends where they connect to the faucets or the washer water valve are starting to rust, it's another sign that they are deteriorating.

What happens in a home when a water line breaks? Insurers could better answer that question by telling us how much money is reimbursed to policyholders nationwide. The amount could well be several billion dollars and yet, the same problem still continues. Why? Because it

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is very hard for most consumers to discipline themselves to shut off the water supply to the washing machine when they are done using it, so most don't bother.

Something new

Sometimes a better mousetrap is invented. Today's column focuses on a new invention.

I just had my plumber install something called the H2OFF. The company name is Dolphin Industries owned by Dr. Craig Sawka of Grosse Ile, who perfected this product only recently. The unit is plumbed into the main water line on the inside of the water meter. Should you have a hose rupture or a line break, it will allow water to flow for only the time you set on a built-in timer. Once the water flows continuously for that time period, a clock automatically shuts the flow off. There is a bypass system used for lawn sprinklers and even a hookup to inform an alarm company that you have a burst pipe.

It does have a negative. The water will flow for the period you set on the clock, which should sort of match up to the time you spend in the shower. If you set the clock for nine minutes, then you can expect the

water to run all over the place if you had a hose or pipe break, but keep in mind that the water damage would be minimal compared to water flowing for days or weeks.

You should talk to your insurance agent and ask if a discount on your home policy might apply if you have one of these devices installed. This new product will soon be hitting the open market and I'm sure will prevent a lot of damage to the American home. For more information on the H2OFF unit, call Sawka at (734) 671-1664 or click on www.h2off.com.

The latest on dip tubes

My phone is ringing off the hook from people who are just now discovering the defective dip tube in their hot water tank. They are just finding out the problem was taken care of by the manufacturers until only Dec. 31, 2000.

At this time there is nothing that can be done for consumers unless they spend their own money to have the problem repaired by a plumber. The Attorney General's office in Lansing is sending out a complaint form to homeowners who are just now discovering the

problem. Call 1-517-335-0855 to order the form.

If you have a hot water tank purchased between 1993 and 1997 (excludes Sears) and you run out of hot water or the appliance on your faucet aerators are plugging up with little chalk like pieces, you probably have a defective dip tube. The class action lawsuit settlement reached last June 2 allowed the six manufacturers to repair them for consumers at no charge only until the end of last year. As of Jan. 1, 2001, they no longer have to do so and that means that millions of homeowners will fix it out of their own pocket.

Something is not right here and the attorney general is taking a close hard look at this. Stay tuned.

For more information on the H2OFF unit, call Sawka at (734) 671-1664.

Joe Gagnon can be heard on *NewsTalk 760, WJR-AM*, every Saturday and Sunday morning. He is a past president of The Society of Consumer Professionals. His second book, "The Words and Wisdom of The Appliance Doctor" is available in book stores. His phone number is (313) 873-3769.

Do you have a question for the Appliance Doctor? Contact him care of Ken Abramczyk, At Home Editor, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or e-mail kabramczyk@ec.homecomm.net

Drywall holes are easy to fix using 'mud'

ASK DAD



HARRY JACHYM

Wallboard (drywall) is more susceptible to damage than plaster walls. The good thing is, wallboard is much easier to repair than plaster walls.

I get many questions about how to repair it. In fact, it's one of the most popular units in my classes.

Here's what tools and materials you'll need: a drywall or keyhole saw, utility knife, 6- and 10-inch mud knives, 120-grit drywall sandpaper, a small bucket of drywall joint compound (mud) and a scrap piece of drywall. (Lumberyard and home

improvement stores often have a few scraps lying around. They may even give one to you, saving you money and the trouble of buying an entire 4-by-8-foot piece of drywall. You also can inquire at a construction site.)

In just about any home repair book, there's bound to be pages on drywall repair.

Depending on the severity of the damage, the repair can be as simple as one application of mud (drywall compound) or may require replacing a section of the board.

Easy methods

Since most of the questions I get deal with holes about the size of a doorknob, let's look at one simple way to patch this hole.

Use a drywall saw or keyhole saw to "square up" the hole. If neither of these are available,

use anything that will cut drywall. Even some serrated knives can work in a pinch.

To make a plug for the hole, start by cutting a piece of wallboard about 4 inches larger than the hole you just "squared."

Drywall is most easily cut by scoring through front (the lighter colored) layer of paper, snapping the board away from the cut then cutting the back layer of paper. In the center of the backside of this piece, score and peel the waste gypsum (plaster) leaving 1 1/2 to 2 inches of paper on the front.

Test fit the plug to the hole and adjust either as necessary.

Spread mud

Spread mud on the wall around the hole, getting some on its edges. Insert the plug into the hole and "knife" it in place with a 6-inch mud knife.

After drying about 24 hours, sand the patch and spread a second coat of mud over the patch, feathering the edges about 2 inches past it. Again allow to dry about 24 hours, sand and feather the mud about 2 inches past the last application. Sand again and if necessary repeat the steps above.

Paint the area, look for flaws and if necessary touch up with mud and paint again.

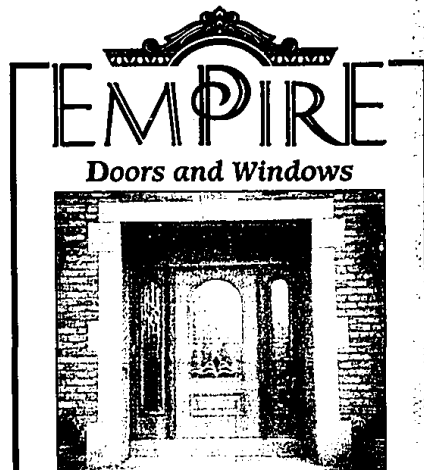
Drywall work like most of the other "trowel trades" requires much practice. Be patient and work carefully. You will get acceptable results.

Harry Jachym, a licensed builder, lives in Plymouth and teaches building trades to high school students. Send any questions or comments to Harry Jachym, care of Ken Abramczyk, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or kabramczyk@ec.homecomm.net

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