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HOME WORK

Efficiencies may cost consumers

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

A few months ago, a new U.S. Department of Energy minimum energy-efficiency standard for clothes washers was finalized, setting new targets for washers manufactured after Jan. 1, 2007.

A coalition of environmental organizations, state and regional energy officials, washer manufacturers and many consumer groups supported the rule.

Washers manufactured to meet the 2004 standard will be 22 percent more efficient than today's baseline clothes washer. Units that meet the 2007 requirements will be 35 percent more efficient.

What it means

What does this mean to you and me?

First of all, this means that everything I wrote and talked about 6 months ago has come true. Yes, the government has finally taken their hands out of the toilet and put them into the washing machine. They have spent their efforts these past several years making sure that toilets use less water. You can ask millions of Americans what they think of their new toilet today. Never before in the history of mankind has the potty been the focus of so many dinner conversations. That won't stop until the new mandate on water consumption is reversed.

Never before have we had such an escalation in the price of a simple toilet. They just keep going up and up. I wonder what is next on the agenda that might

boost the price of a normal product. We could end up seeing a new law that requires every home owner to build a new out-house.

Now the government is checking out the washers and their energy efficiency. Under these new requirements it is hoped consumers will save energy and water but one day washers will probably cost you so much more than what you pay for one today. The young couple getting started in life today can spend as little as \$269 for a washer. That washer will be removed from the market altogether. Tomorrow's unit might be priced at a "low" price of \$600, but use less energy. I just can't figure all this out unless the manufacturers are jumping with joy over these upcoming increased prices.

You could say that appliance manufacturers are going to make a real killing on all of this energy efficiency. Weren't they a part of the coalition group that pushed the U.S. Energy Department to mandate this new standard?

Price gouging?

I just recently read an article in Business Week magazine that Maytag priced their Neptune front load washer at \$600 when it was first introduced and then within a few days changed to \$1,000 the purchase price. The reason stated by the then chief operating officer was that consumers would pay extra to save energy. That may very well be true, but what about the subject of gouging? I believe that was the case and will be again when these new washers are created with all their little tricks.

I am going to live to be an old man before you can make me believe that a washer using less water does a better job than the one I have in my basement. They have washing machines out there today without agitators and they tell me they out-clean what I have.

First of all, let me give you some old-fashioned facts. Except for those people who work in certain fields, the majority of my clothes and yours are not dirty to begin with. What, sweat that is in our clothes is not considered dirt, it's moisture. I can wash that out by swishing a shirt near the shore of a lake. But if a manufacturer can make you believe that their product out-washes another, you will buy it.

Look at Frigidaire's up-and-down agitator of 30 years ago. They boasted of its cleaning action that was so much better than anyone else's and yes, they sold millions. If it was so good, why didn't anyone else copy it when it went out of production?

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) 673-9789.

Got a question for the Appliance Doctor? Write to Joe Gagnon c/o Ken Abramczyk, At Home Editor, Observer Newspapers, 36261 Schoolcraft, Livonia MI 48150 or e-mail kabramczyk@oh.comcast.net. The Appliance Doctor will answer your question in a future column.

Learn remodeling

The Remodelers Council of the Building Industry Association of Southeastern Michigan (BIA) will present "ABCs of Remodeling" 6-9 p.m. Wednesday, May 2 at the Bloomfield Township Library, 1099 Lone Pine, on the southeast corner of Lone Pine and Telegraph.

For registration information, call (248) 737-4477 anytime.

ADVERTISEMENT

Budget Bathtub Liners

Company offers solutions for tub troubles

When was the last time you did a fantastic job cleaning your bathroom, only to realize the tub still looked less than stellar? If the finish on your bathtub is chipped, pitting, faded or permanently stained no amount of cleanser and scrubbing will do the job. The tub must be replaced.

Reglazing is an option, but only a temporary one. There's no guarantee the finish won't go dark again, and the reglazing process is difficult and involves many dangerous chemicals.

The bathtub could be replaced, but there is even more mess involved, not to mention the cost.

There is another solution, though, and Budget Bathtub Liners Co., with showrooms in Lincoln Park and Madison Heights, has the answer: a new bathtub liner or full complete system consisting of Bathtub Liner and Wall Surround system.

One of the hottest trends in bathroom remodeling, bathtub liners and wall systems fit over not only existing bathtubs, but also ceramic walls in your bathroom. That means less mess and less time between what your bathroom looks like now and a complete new appearance.

For a limited time only, bathtub liners are on sale from \$359 (installed). Complete systems, which include bathtub liner and wall surround, are on sale from \$1295. That's about 1/2 the cost of replacing an old tub and ceramic tiles.

Budget Bathtub Liner is able to offer the low prices, according to David J. Connelley, president of the large volume of business it does.

"We're the largest distributor of Acrylic Bathtub Liners and Wall Surround Systems in the country," Hardley said. "I'm proud of that."

When a homeowner places an order for a new liner, employees take 15 different measurements and several photographs of the existing bathtub. The measurements and photos are then sent to the company's factory, where a custom liner is made using one of 750 molds in stock.

In addition, seven colors and four marble finishes are available along with a complete line of matching accessories which includes a full line of Delta and Kohler fixtures. These are colors Hardley said many customers opt for even if their current fixtures are working fine.

"If you buy a new car, you wouldn't ask them to put used tires on it," he said.

All Bathtub Liner and Wall Surround Systems are made of DR/ABS Owens Corning High Impact Acrylic and carry a Lifetime Warranty. This is the same material bottled helmets are made from and the liners are about



three times the thickness of those found at home improvement stores and are guaranteed not to chip or peel and to retain their finish. In addition, installation, which can usually be done in one day, is guaranteed.

Budget Bathtub Liners Co. is at 25170 John R. Madison Heights and 3387 Fort St., Lincoln Park between Emmons and Champaign adjacent to Mickey's Store. The showroom is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Noon to 4 p.m. Sundays. For more information, call Budget Bathtub Liner at 1-800-BATHTUB.

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