

HOME WORK

Heated water can explode inside

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON
A few months ago I watched a television news story about a lady who had lost her sight because an item inside a microwave oven exploded and sent super-heated water into her face.

Following the airing of this story, I received many phone calls from homeowners asking how this could happen. Quite honestly I have never heard of it happening before. I was amazed then and I'm even more so today because in the last two weeks, I've received a call from an attorney and an insurance company who reported two different incidents. Today, 30 years after microwaves were first developed, consumers are more and more concerned about it.

Energy isn't released

The explosions were created by cooking vessels, which had a perfectly smooth interior surface. Most bowls contain imperfections, such as scratches, grooves or other markings, from which boiling bubbles are broken up into more bubbles. This allows the energy to be released outside of the cooking vessel.

Microwave users are endangered by boiling water cooked inside of a perfect vessel that has no scratches. The energy bubble sits at the bottom. When the vessel is moved, so

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does the bubble, except with great force, and that caused a great explosion directly into the face of the user.

That should serve as words of advice - never boil water in a microwave oven.

In all my years of teaching and repairing microwave ovens, I have never seen an instruction book which tells us not to boil water in a microwave. Can you imagine telling someone that in 1970, when manufacturers were claiming the greatest cooking invention since fire was now available for home use? They were saying that you could cook anything in this thing and even offered cooking classes for anyone who purchased a microwave. They spent millions of dollars to promote this product of the future and that is exactly what it became. There are not many homes today which do not have a microwave oven.

No warnings yet
If manufacturers had put a warning in the instruction book which told consumers not to boil water because it could explode, that could - and would - scare off potential buyers. People back then were frightened to death of these things. If manufacturers had placed this kind of warning on

their microwaves, they would have a tough time selling them to the American public.

The big question is, did they know about this and possibly disregarded the safety of the end user? If so, it is now up to the courts to find out and so I say, this story may have just begun.

I remember reading in the instruction book, to clean the interior walls of your microwave, boil a container of water and let it steam up. That process would make it much easier to wipe off the interior using simple paper towel. I find it very hard to believe that any manufacturer would do this knowing full well of the danger involved, but on second thought, I never imagined manufacturers building and selling over 20 million hot water tanks with a defective dip tube.

We sometimes know so little about the products in our homes. Do you know how a 4-inch microwave cooks food, why food does not brown like a regular stove? Do you know how it cooks so fast? Do you know why metal can damage the magnetron tube?

I wonder how many people have been hurt in these past 30 years and thought it was their own fault in using the microwave oven. Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can be heard on WJR-AM 760 every Saturday and Sunday mornings. 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 telephone number is (313) 873-9789. E-mail him with any questions at hagrabcmcyk@aol.com.

Build your backyard borders

ASK DAD



HARRY JACHYM
there's less lawn to mow.)

To ease the problem of mowing or trimming around the flowerbeds, we created a border of paving bricks around them. Not only do they look nice, the lawn mower wheels ride on the bricks, eliminating the need to trim the lawn. The bricks were laid and neatly and the border was tedious to build.

As hard as it is to believe, I think I may have found something that makes concrete work fun.

I saw BorderMaker, marketed by the Quikrete Company, at a home improvement store. BorderMaker is a reusable plastic mold, which creates a concrete garden border that looks very much like paving bricks.

Using the BorderMaker mold does away with the tedium of individual brick setting and the material cost is much less.

First you dig

To start, dig a trench about 2 1/2 inches deep and about 4 inches wide around the bed. The trench isn't necessary if you want the border raised. Unlike real bricks, the bottom of this

My lovely wife, Karen, enjoys her flowerbeds. I enjoy them as well for many reasons. Obviously they add beauty to our home. (Karen enjoys gardening, but I like the beds mostly because



HARRY JACHYM

trench need not be level, as the concrete will naturally conform to the irregularities.

How much concrete you'll need is based on the length of border. The package instructions offers guidance. I suggest mixing no more than two bags at a time, particularly if the weather is hot.

Thoroughly mix the concrete using a hoe or shovel. Concrete mixed too wet is slow to set, too dry is hard to work with and tends to crumble. Toothpaste consistency is about right and always remember, it's easier to add more water than it is to remove it. (It will take a little over one gallon of water to hydrate an 80-pound bag of concrete mix.)

Wear gloves, glasses

When working with concrete, it's a smart practice to wear eye protection, gloves and a dust mask.

Position the mold; fill it with

concrete and level. After removing the mold, the slight lip on the top of the block is smoothed with the trowel or a paint brush. Color is available where BorderMaker is sold or at concrete supply houses, so you're not stuck with cement gray. Keep tools damp while in use and clean them as soon as possible when the work is complete. Once concrete sets on tools, it's very difficult to remove and can be very corrosive to metal. Let the blocks cure for a few days before wheeling anything, such as a lawnmower, over them. Quikrete also markets other WalkMaker and BlockMaker forms to make garden walks and patio stones. See these at their Web site at: www.quikrete.com/catalog/catalog_bforms.html

Harry Jachym, a licensed builder, lives in Plymouth and teaches building trades to high school students.

Water conservation takes many forms

BY LEE REICH
AP WEEKLY FEATURES

No one wants to stand by and watch their tomato plants wilt away to nothing in dry weather. Then again, who wants to run their well dry or waste water?

The challenge is to keep plants happy and, at the same time, conserve water.

Water conservation begins with making sure that every raindrop gets into the soil instead of running elsewhere. Hillside gardens catch rain best if they are terraced or have low ridges built perpendicular to the

slope. On flat ground, soil formed into slightly raised basins around individual plants ensures that water runs right to these plants' roots.

Bare soils form surface crusts that shed rainfall almost like concrete. Encourage percolation by loosening the surface with a hoe or, even better, covering the surface with an organic mulch like straw, leaves or compost. Pent moss is not a good choice because, although very absorbent when moistened, it sheds water when dry.

Once water is in the soil, keep

it there for plants as long as possible. Organic mulch also conserves water by preventing evaporation from the soil surface.

Despite efforts to catch and hold rainwater, supplemental watering might be needed. If you use a sprinkler, apply a lot of water infrequently - a 1-inch depth once a week suits most plants. The best time to sprinkle is midmorning so that leaves dry off quickly enough to avoid disease, yet temperatures are not yet warm enough to cause excessive evaporation.

PLUMBING TIPS

DO YOU RUN OUT OF HOT WATER?



JEFFREY MOSS

Are you always running out of hot water when you take a shower? Does your family have to wait until your water heater recovers to take another shower? Let me introduce you to the newest water heater on the market today. It is called the Takagi instantaneous water heater.

The Takagi Instantaneous water heater delivers up to 7 gallons of hot water continuously, enough to shower and still fill the washing machine or run the dishwasher. No more waiting until the water heater recovers to take a shower.

The tankless design and computerized temperature control insure the unit will provide an endless supply of hot water at the desired temperature. The electronic ignition feature means that gas is consumed only when you are using the hot water. No energy is wasted when hot water is not in use.

Features:
• Endless hot water

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- Made using the best quality materials for durability and long life

For more information, please contact your licensed plumbing contractor or Advance Plumbing Supply Company at 248-669-7474.



Jeffrey Moss is vice-president of Advance Plumbing Supply Co. in Walled Lake and Detroit. Call (800) 560-7474 toll-free.

Have a plumbing question? Write to Jeffrey at Advance Plumbing Supply Co., 1977 E.W. Maple Rd., Walled Lake, MI 48390. www.advanceplumbing.com

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Free Satellite TV Comes To Oakland County

Call Digital Satellite toll free at 888-240-6300 for free equipment installation and more!

Digital Satellite is offering this special in the Oakland County area so that viewers can finally have a choice instead of being forced to cable TV and having to pay exorbitant prices to have it.

How does the term free sound? Let's face it, cable viewers don't have a choice. And they have to pay the price dictated by their local cable company. Now the viewers have a choice.

Brand new satellite TV packages being offered by Digital Satellite based in Saginaw, Michigan, is offering viewers better viewing quality, more channels and more options at prices closer to or cheaper than your local cable company. Also, you, the customer can have the package tailored to your viewing needs. The channels can be what you want, when you want, and the price that you and your family want to watch.

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Digital Satellite will come to your home, during this special offer to install a satellite dish under the reversible product line of DISH Network and up to two receivers absolutely free. Now who wouldn't want to exchange a lousy cable

bill for a deal like that? Plus, those who take advantage of this deal will receive up to 150 channels of quality programming. These aren't your basic throw-away cable channels either. These are the top 150 channels in the nation. That's a \$500 value for free! Who needs another channel of infomercials? Digital Satellite is the best. The digital quality will enhance your viewing pleasure and the picture on your television set will be crisper and bolder - like nothing you have seen before. Even better, customers who take advantage of this offer from Digital Satellite can choose from a variety of different packages which will give them the cream-of-the-crop channels from the best, such as HBO, Starz, Cinemax and more. In fact, this deal from Digital Satellite can get you up to eight top notch channels for no extra charge. Even if your satellite is broken somewhere, they will replace it quickly without charge! Try getting that option from another company or the cable TV industry?

By calling today, you can have the installation, done by qualified professionals, at your residence as soon as tomorrow. The response has been



amazingly positive. Alan Young and Tom Nowak, owners of the company, said the response from customers has been more than surprising. Alan explained that once people get a taste of this service, they tell friends and family members about what a difference this is from traditional cable. "It blows cable away," Nowak said, "you're getting at least three times more programming. There are no gimmicks, people absolutely love it!" To take advantage of this offer, just call (888) 240-6300 today and the world of television as you know it will change for the better.

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