

HOME WORK

Need a repair? Read these tips before you call for any service

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

Michigan Attorney General Jennifer Granholm filed a notice of intended action on Aug. 14 against Sands Appliance of Farmington Hills, accusing the company of deceptive business practices in making unnecessary and excessively expensive home appliance repairs. Granholm is also filing criminal misdemeanor charges against three Sands employees.

Under Michigan law Sands Appliance has an opportunity within 10 days to cease and desist the alleged unlawful methods and submit an assurance of discontinuance. If meetings do not result in any assurance, Granholm can file a lawsuit, which could result in a maximum \$25,000 civil penalty. Granholm teamed up with Michigan State Police, the city of Farmington Hills, Consumer Protection Committee and myself to coordinate an undercover investigation of potentially fraudulent repair activity.

Appliance owners worry

Since Granholm's announcement, homeowners who have

used this company the last 30 years have called me to tell me about their experiences with this accused company. They ask what can they do about it, even if it happened some time ago. I've suggested that they should call the attorney general's office at (617) 335-0855 and ask for a formal complaint form, fill it out and send it in with photocopies of all pertinent information. Occasionally, we hear about companies accused of deceptive practices, but thank God that the majority of appliance repair companies are good, hard-working and honest. It is only the handful of certain ones that create a tainted image for those of us in the industry. I hope this recent action helps change that.

Here are guidelines

As a consumer you need to make sure who you call is legitimate. Let me suggest a few guidelines:

- Contact the Better Business Bureau at (248) 644-9100 or www.detroit.bbb.org
- Contact the attorney general's office at (617) 335-0855 or www.ag.state.mi.us
- Phone book ads are no guarantee that you are getting a reputable business to come to your home.
- Call the store where you purchased the product. They will give you the name of someone they use and if you're not happy with the service, at least you can complain to them. These companies

are usually reputable and don't want to hurt the relationship with the retailer.

■ Make sure the service invoice you receive after the work is done has all the important information on it, such as company name, address and phone number. Make sure you can read what the service technician has written and that you understand what work has been done. Make sure the technician explains what equals the dollars you are spending.

■ Stay with the service technician while in your home and watch what work is being done. Never pay the cost with cash. Some repair companies offer 10 percent off the price if you pay cash. Pay the bill with credit card or check, and if the work is unsatisfactory, you get a few days to change the outcome.

The Appliance Repair Act, which I have talked about so many times, is still in the hands of our government. State Sens. Bill Bullard, R-Milford, and Thaddeus McCotter, R-Livonia, will be taking action on this bill near the end of September. If you know them, maybe you can suggest that this recent appliance repair case should be enough to get it passed.

Joe Gagnon can be heard Saturday and Sunday on 760 WJL. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His phone number is (313) 873-9789.

Use care and take your time when applying latex paint

ASK DAD



HARRY JACKYM

Visit any Habitat for Humanity building site, and you probably will see between 10 and 20 volunteers helping out. Volunteers possess skill levels ranging from contractors to "certified nail benders," but everyone comes to help a great cause.

With our three houses near completion, much of our work now focuses on painting. Our volunteers do pretty well on the flat finish walls, but the semi-gloss on the doors and trim has been a challenge for some.

Latex is easy

We use latex (water-based) paints because they are less noxious to use and far easier to clean up than alkyd (oil-based) paints. Water-based products are, by and large, replacing oil. Latex paints also have a fuller body and dry faster than oils, but these advantages have a down side when improperly

used, especially on glossier finishes.

Latex paint should be applied with long strokes, using the tips of the brush. Avoid going over the same spot more than once. It's imperative to use a good quality paint brush designed for latex paint.

There's no need to dip the bristles further than half their length into the paint. Remember, you're painting with the tips. Doing this just loads the upper bristles with paint, which makes the cleanup difficult. Tapping excess paint off the brush, rather than dragging across the lip of the can, is better for the brush and helps prevent paint buildup on the can rim.

Steady as you paint

Keeping paint from unwanted areas is best done with painter's masking tape (usually blue in color) unless you have a real steady hand. Regular masking tape can damage the surface when removed. If the paint begins to lift when removing the tape, carefully slice through the paint between the tape and trim with a razor. Remove the tape as soon as possible.

We are installing the com-

mon six panel styled doors in the houses. These doors demand particular attention when painting them. It's best to lay the door horizontally, then remove the hardware. Paint the panel areas, starting at the edges, working towards the raised center first.

Next paint the center vertical areas between the panels (mullions), follow by painting the horizontal areas between the panels and at the top and bottom (rails), then finish by painting the long outside areas (stiles) and the edges of the door.

Another of latex paint's advantages is it dries to a tough, durable and waterproof film. If allowed to dry on painting tools, they will be nearly impossible to clean. When leaving the tools for even a short time, cover them with plastic wrap.

For proper cleaning, get as much excess paint out of brushes and rollers as possible by scraping it into a box, bag or trash can. Thoroughly wash the tools with soap and running water, then dry and store.

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

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