

Vinegar helps paint last longer on concrete

BY MORRIS AND JAMES CAKEY FOR AP WEEKLY FEATURES

If you've just painted your garage floor and now the paint is peeling, here's a tip that will make paint on concrete stick the next time you paint.

When you paint concrete, you can keep the paint from peeling off by washing the floor first with warm water; then rinse and let the floor dry thoroughly for at least a day. Using a clean paint brush, apply a coat of white vinegar as a pre-paint primer.

Once it dries, it will increase the bond, and the paint you apply will hold and last much longer.

This works on most things made of concrete, and benefits many other types of surfaces, too, such as metal, wood or plastic.

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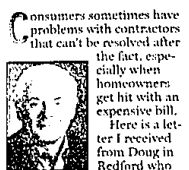
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Before repairs, ask about labor charge



Joe Gagnon
Appliance Doctor

Consumers sometimes have problems with contractors that can't be resolved after the fact, especially when homeowners get hit with an expensive bill.

Here is a letter I received from Doug in Redford who questions the amount charged him by a heating company. "My furnace went out Monday afternoon," Doug writes. "I called the company that installed the furnace at 7 p.m. on Monday. We decided over the phone that the draft inducer needed to be replaced."

"Since the parts warehouse was closed, he scheduled my repair in the morning. They arrived at about 9 a.m. and had the part installed and the cleanup completed in less than an hour. The part was under warranty so I was responsible to pay for the labor only. The charge was \$235. My wife called me, because she thought the charge too high."

"I spoke to the repairman and disputed the cost but he stuck to his guns and stated the charges were fair. I reluctantly agreed to pay the bill and my wife wrote the check. The charges seem about \$100 too high. In your opinion, was I overcharged?"

EXPENSIVE LABOR

Well, Doug, if you took this case to court, you would have a difficult time proving your case. Even if you removed the service call charge (trip charge) from the total of \$235, it still would show an expensive hourly labor rate. Some heating companies use a book rate per part and I've always believe that this method is a ripoff.

Apparently this is the same company who installed the furnace which makes me wonder whether you paid too much for the furnace when you bought it. The only thing you can do now is what any company doesn't want you to do: Tell all your family and friends not to use this company that no longer trust.

The draft inducer that was replaced was not a tough job to do for a qualified heating tech-

nician and it certainly shows their hourly labor rate to be extremely high. Your letter points to an important fact that consumers should ask whenever calling for any kind of service: What is your hourly labor rate?

DRYING TIME

Jim and Kerry write ... "I have a Hotpoint gas dryer that is about 10 years old. It seems to take a lot longer to dry the clothes now. Is it worth repairing? Can I do it myself?"

Jim, I hope this answer saves you about \$400 and that you take Kerry out for a nice dinner on me. A great majority of service calls on dryers are related to the vent line on the back.

Any time a consumer has a problem with slow drying, they should go directly to the vent line and check it. The air must move through the dryer and get to the outside. If you slow down this air movement, you've got a problem. (The service industry across this country is getting rich off calls like this.)

There is nothing difficult about taking the vent line off and cleaning it. You should

also know that a dirty vent line can be responsible for starting a fire, which occurs over 15,000 times a year in the United States.

While doing this simple job, go outside with a toothbrush and clean the hinges on the trap door where the air is propelled to the outside. You would be surprised at how many service calls are performed by technicians to remove a dead squirrel looking for a new home.

The animals will crawl down the vent line and either walk right into the fan blade or bite on a red or blue wire at which point they expire rather quickly. Now after a few weeks you begin to smell an offensive odor in your clothes that just went through the dryer.

I strongly suggest that if this should ever occur with your dryer, that you not be looking over the service technicians shoulder when he corrects the problem.

It is not a pretty sight.

Joe Gagnon can now be heard on WWJ-950 and WXYT-1270. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His telephone number is (248) 455-7281.

SHOW

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Saturday, March 21, 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, March 22, 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m.

Van De Vetter Pratt has conducted projects in theaters, arenas and museums across the nation.

Her works include projects for the MTV Music Awards and the Microsoft Catch the Wave Conference. Pratt has also appeared on The Home Shopping Network.

Show attendees can also see

the Garden Marketplace, featuring blooming and flowering landscaped gardens. A Parade of Homes display will be on hand featuring a pictorial array of new homes.

Other highlights include appearances by local radio personalities and a Dear John contest where homeowners can enter to win a free bathroom makeover, courtesy of The Bath Shoppe at Mathison Supply of Livonia, Garden City and Canton.

Additional show features include advice, ideas and innovations for yard and garden projects, home repair and

remodeling and a Treasure Chest contest with daily prizes.

Show hours are Friday, March 21, noon to 9 p.m.; Saturday, March 22, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, March 23, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$6 for senior citizens. Children under 12 will be admitted free.

For more information on the show, call (248) 862-1019, or visit www.builders.org

BIA also sponsors other home improvement shows, including the Spring Home & Garden Show, April 4-6 at the Novi Expo Center; and the Fall Remodeling & Furniture Show,

coming this fall at the Novi Expo Center.

Headquartered in Farmington Hills, BIA is a trade association representing more than 2,200 builders, remodelers, multi-family property owners, developers and suppliers to the single family and multifamily residential construction industry. BIA is affiliated with the Michigan Association of Home Builders in Lansing and the National Association of Home Builders in Washington D.C. Membership nationwide includes more than 210,000 individuals and companies.

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