

Tips provided on when to repair, when to buy

Mike Staats, who calls himself "Captain Toolhead," owns an appliance repair business and writes for an industry magazine called Appliance Service News in Chicago. Staats has several pointers that are helpful to anyone in the appliance industry, but I'd like to reiterate them here to educate and inform the general public.

- Don't be satisfied with slow-responding services or unreliable and non-guaranteed service. Remember that you are the customer... raise your expectations. There are lots of good repair people in your area. If you have a good repair company, that's great. If you don't have a good service, get one.
- Don't junk your major appliances automatically when something goes wrong. Explore the repair options first so that you have something to compare to the cost of a new appliance. Generally, most repairs should cost less than 15-20 percent of the cost of replacement.
- Respond to appliance noises as they occur. Don't wait. That noise is your appliance saying, "Fix me now, fix me now." You can fix it now or wait until more significant damage occurs and more expensive repair bills follow.
- Think logically when starting do-it-yourself repair. Train your mind to focus on the simple things first before tackling the more complex and more expensive repairs. Perform the dumb things you must do before you call the appliance repair company. Specifically avoid random part changing and makeshift repairs.
- Thou shalt religiously

- clean thy condenser. This applies to refrigerators, freezers and air conditioners. Also clean the dryer vent system periodically.
- Thou shalt evaluate all influencing factors when deciding on major appliance service contracts including the reliability and reputation of the service provider, age of the major appliances, cost of the coverage versus replacement cost of the appliances, and the ability of your family budget to withstand unexpected repair bills.
- Thou shalt not wait until the manufacturer's warranty period has expired to notify a service of a problem or a possible problem. If there is the slightest doubt that something is operating correctly, call your dealer and/or service right away. Don't procrastinate.
- Product warranties are extremely important. Be an intelligent consumer by making yourself aware of the parts and labor warranty before you buy a new major appliance and compare coverage between brand names.
- Thou shalt "lighten-up" and "chill out." Major appliance generally, most repairs should cost less than 15-20 percent of the cost of replacement.
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Joe Gagnon is host of Ask The Handyman on Infinity Radio AM 1270 8 a.m. to noon Saturdays and Sundays. You can hear his tips on WFL 950 on weekdays. You can call him on his show at (248) 356-1270.

Make sure your garage door operates safely

My wife, Karen, called me to the garage when she discovered the door would only lower about two feet, stop and reverse. It took me a while to discover that the track on the electric opener was corroded. A little WD-40 did the trick and the door was able to close.

Your garage door may be subjected to more wear and tear than any other part of your home, yet it is too often taken for granted. It's heavy, subjected to a harsh environment, under great tension and usually used at least twice a day. A neglected door almost

always becomes noisy, but continued neglect can create a dangerous door. Simple maintenance should take no more than 10 minutes and you'll need no special tools. Most of today's garage doors are the sectional type with some sort of spring counterbalance. Most of the following tips will apply to just about any type of door.

- Tighten all nuts and bolts. Pay particular attention to those at the roller brackets. Inspect and tighten the leg bolts holding the track to the wall as necessary. Squirt a little spray lube (WD-40) on all pivot points.
- Inspect the rollers. Plastic rollers tend to crack or chip. The bearings on steel rollers will wear causing the roller to tilt. These can be purchased at hardware and home improvement stores. Just remove the screws holding the bracket to

the door, remove the roller and replace. The bottom roller bracket is attached to the lift cable. Leave the replacement of this one to a professional.

- Check the cable for signs of fraying and corrosion. Pay particular attention to the loop at the bottom of the door since this is often subjected to salt laden moisture. This cable is under tension; if there are signs of deterioration, don't attempt to replace the cable yourself.
- The lubricant on the traveler track (or tube) will become stiff and attract dirt. Clean it with WD-40 (or similar) and a rag. Apply a coat of spray-on white lithium grease. Check the emergency release for proper operation.
- Disengage your door opener and lift the door about half way. A properly balanced door will hold in this position. If your door is not balanced,

call a professional.

- Test the auto reverse feature on your opener. A full paper towel roll will crush when the door is closed on it but should get no closer than one inch from the floor before coming to a stop. It should reverse within two seconds of stopping. You should also check the auto reverse at about the mid-point of travel by grabbing the bottom of the door as it's about halfway closed. Again, it should stop and reverse. This simple maintenance should be performed at least once a year, even better make it part of your spring and fall routine.

Harry Jachym is a Plymouth resident. Send any questions or comments to Jachym at askdad@comcast.net or in care of Ken Abramczyk, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

FLOORS

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CREATIVE SPACES

All three winners this year chose to work with Healing Botanicals. Melissa Endress of Detroit, a student at CCS, was awarded first prize. In her depiction, inspired by the element of contrast, she featured the lively patterned rug in a neutral-toned setting.

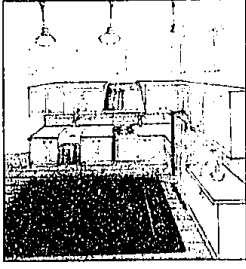
"The rug exhibits brilliant colors and complex shapes in contrast to its surrounding, which is neutral in color and employs horizontal and vertical lines," Endress said in her statement. "As a result of the dramatic contrast, the rug is the focal point of the space."

Heather Early of Kalamazoo, a student at WMU, and Colleen Stickney of Ypsilanti, a student at CCS, were each awarded honorable mention.

In her rendering, Early placed the rug in a bathroom that had a spiritual element in its design and decor. In her statement, she said she researched Tibetan culture and learned that "Tibetan people are very spiritual and the interior spaces were very rectilinear."

"The interior spaces had a complementary color scheme and low-intensity hues were used on the walls, furniture and accessories," she said.

"Bathrooms are used for many things. A bathroom is functional but can be both relaxing and spiritual. In my design I used



Castle R.W. Blaszyk placed a Persian rug in a kitchen, with white tiles and cabinets contrasting the rich colors of the rug and wood floors warming the room and making a background for the rug.

low-intensity hues together with rectilinear and curvilinear shapes to create contrast and emphasize the elements of the rug."

In her illustration, Stickney placed the rug in a neutral entryway to a simple model home, to showcase the colors and designs.

The multicolored rug "has so many vibrant colors and designs that shouldn't be lost in an environment," she said in her statement.

The room featured cool stone flooring, a brushed aluminum window frame, and a

doorway with a warm neutral wall tone.

"These simple materials make the rug pop out of the space and gives the room warmth that it wouldn't have without it," Stickney said in the statement.

"The rug's free-flowing design mimics the trees and nature coming in from the glass on either side of the foyer. This gives the room a subtle complete aesthetic feeling."

DIFFERENT SITES

Among the entrants who chose Royal Tai, Cassie R.W. Blaszyk of Milford featured the rug in a kitchen and Erin Devries of Grand Rapids placed it in a dining room.

Blaszyk, an EMU student, wanted to keep the retro style of the '30s and '40s while creating a transitional feeling to the future with modern appliances and clean-lined windows, she said in her statement.

Blaszyk contrasted bright white against the rich colors of the rug in her depiction. White tiles were used as a backdrop behind white bead board cabinets. The rich wood floors warmed the room and made a background for the rug.

Devries, a Kendall College student, mixed classic, luxurious furnishings with an airy feeling. In her illustration, the rug brightened the room, and windows and French doors brought the natural environment into the space from outside.

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