

'Babyproofed' home keeps children safe

A home that is safe for adults may be filled with hazards for young children.

To help protect youngsters, the Western Wayne Oakland Board of Realtors can "babyproof" your home. A good way to start is to survey the home from the child's perspective. Look for anything that might be harmful at or near floor level.

Some tips offered by the Realtors:

- Move household plants beyond reach. Although the earth itself may not pose a major threat, the leaves, buds or flowers of some plants may be poisonous.
- Knicknacks, ash trays, vases or anything that might break to leave cutting edges — also should be kept out of reach. Watch for those resting on a table covering that might be pulled by a child to shatter the objects on the floor. Also be alert to dangling cords from table lamps that a crawling child might pull or tangle in.
- Coffee tables with sharp edges that could cause eye or head injuries should be moved so that corners are not exposed. Sharp corners on large tables can be shielded by rubber guards available in many stores.
- Special precautions are needed in the kitchen which is laden with boytraps for toddlers. Knives and other dangerous utensils should be placed in drawers beyond reach of youngsters as should appliances including cords. Many cleaning supplies are toxic and are often kept

under the kitchen sink. These should be moved to a high shelf or a lock kept on any reachable cupboard.
- Bathrooms also can be another area of high danger for children. Prescription and over-the-counter drugs should be safely stored beyond the reach of youngsters or locked up. Also check the access to bathroom cleaning supplies. It's a good idea to keep the bathroom door closed to avoid lots taking a painful tumble into the bathtub or on tile floors.

- Electrical cords should, as much as possible, be hidden under carpeting or stapled to baseboard. (While stapling wire to baseboard, be sure the staple does not penetrate the wire.) Be on guard against any that are worn or frayed which might give severe shock to a curious child. Plastic safeguards can be inserted in wall plugs to thwart children's insertion of foreign objects.
- Immediately pick up any pins, buttons, coins or similar objects that fall to the floor even if a search is required. They can be swallowed by a youngster.

- Plastic garment or garbage bags, furniture covers or similar objects that could suffocate a child should be safely stored away.
- Access to stairwells should be guarded by closed doors or gates. Even a tumble down padded stairs could cause injury to a youngster.

- Keep emergency phone numbers, such as those for the nearest doctor, hospital and poison control center readily available.

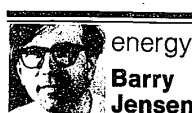
Caulking is best in warm weather

A good warm-weather project is caulking and weatherstripping your house or condominium. Not only will you help hold down your cooling bill, but you'll help next winter's heating bill as well.

Caulking should be done in warm weather, above 35 degrees, or the compound becomes stiff and difficult to apply. So you have lots of time to put it off before caulking becomes virtually impossible because of the weather.

- Caulking or packing seems to make them airtight requires detective work. Air leaks not only increase the cost of heating and cooling, they let in damaging moisture in summer and let out precious humidity in winter.
- Make an annual check of caulking by looking in the following areas to see if new caulking is needed:
 - Where pipes and wires enter ceilings.
 - Moldings, joints, nails and screws in sliding panels, splash panels, windows, top seams, doors, roof vents and wheel housings.
 - Between porches and the main body of the house.
 - Beneath an unheated attic where the chimney meets the lap siding.
 - Around exterior openings such as faucets and electrical fixtures.

YOU CAN buy caulking in many colors to match the outside of your home. Before applying caulking compound, clean the area of paint build-up, dirt or deteriorated



energy
Barry Jensen

caulk with solvent and a putty knife or a large screwdriver.

Drawing a good bead of a caulk from the caulking gun takes practice. Make sure the bead overlaps both sides for a tight seal.

A wide bead may be necessary to make sure caulk adheres to both sides.

Fill wide cracks like those at the sills, where the house meets the foundation, with oakum, glass fiber or insulation strips. In places where you can't quite fill the gap, finish the job with caulk.

Caulking compound also comes in rope form. Unwind it and force it into the cracks with your fingers. You can fill long cracks easily this way.

SEVERAL TYPES of caulking are available. The least durable and least expensive are oil- or resin-based. Latex, butyl or polyvinyl are more durable and more expensive. The

most durable and expensive materials are elastomeric based.

Weatherstripping is an easy do-it-yourself project. Several types of weatherstripping are available. All types stop air from entering around such places as doors and windows — a major source of heat loss in most homes.

The weatherstripping should be applied around all windows and outside doors. Double-check the threshold portion of outside doors.

One of the few good things about a cold, windy day is its ability to show you the bad spots in your weatherstripping.

DO NOT leave a crack between the bottom of the door and the threshold. Wear sometimes causes a crack to develop.

The least expensive weatherstripping materials are made of felt or foam strips, but they aren't durable. Rolled vinyl, with or without back, is the most expensive weatherstripping, but it lasts a long time. Almost all types of weatherstripping are relatively easy to install.

Some of the most helpful people you'll ever meet are at the Energy Hotline. To get more information about caulking and weatherstripping (or almost anything else related to energy conservation), give them a toll-free call at 1-800-292-4704.

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