

Check out water heaters

By POPULAR MECHANICS
For AP SPECIAL FEATURES

Q: We have two 50-gallon electric water heaters connected in series, but we seldom use large amounts of hot water. If hot water is being dispensed one tank at a time, it seems that the water in the second heater in the series would rarely be dispensed.

A: Could this standing water be a breeding ground for bacteria? How practical is it to turn off one via the breaker switch until large amounts of hot water are needed?

A: Yes, standing water can be a breeding ground for bacteria, that are always present in water. However, in a municipal water supply, the bacteria are normally not toxic, but they can cause smelly or rusty water.

If your water heaters are connected in series, you won't have standing water. As water is drawn from the first tank, makeup water will flow from the second tank into the first, and from the water supply into the second tank.

If you turn off the power to the second tank, that tank will function as a preheater by raising the water temperature to that approaching room temperature before it enters the first tank. This reduces your energy costs.

In the case where more hot water is needed, there are several ways to deal with this problem. For instance, a plumber may install the second water heater in parallel. Water heaters that are the same and BTU input are usually installed this way — the advantage being that the system will provide large quantities of hot water at one time, since water is drawn from both tanks simultaneously. Also, this system allows you to shut off and

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drain one tank for periods where the extra hot-water capacity is not needed.

Water heaters that are different sizes are often installed in series. The first and smaller tank functions as a preheater for the larger tank.

Other options to consider would be installing the water heaters individually (so each serves a group of fixtures), installing an instantaneous water heater (a small gas or electric water heater adjacent to a tub/shower or sink) or installing a single large water heater.

Each installation has advantages and drawbacks, and you

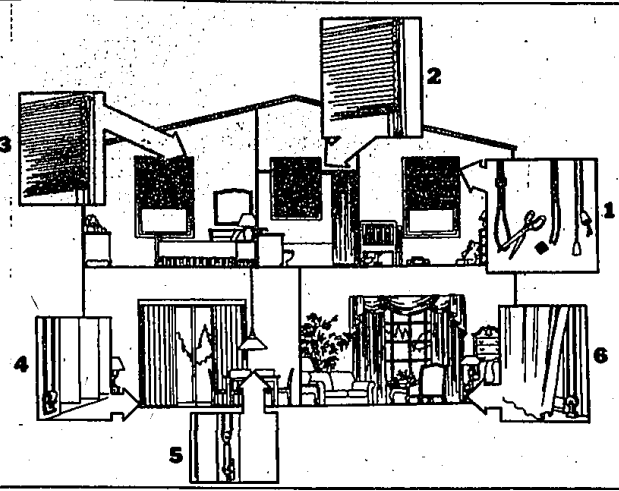
should discuss each of these with the contractor who will perform the installation.

Q: I have a 4-zone, gas-fired, forced hot-water heating system. The water heater has started making a low moaning noise, intermittently, almost a groan. The system is 28 years old and has had minimal maintenance. How can I stop the noise?

A: It sounds like the bearings are failing on the circulator pump. Over the years, the bearings wear — especially if they have not been adequately lubricated.

Worn bearings get hot, overheat and develop a scraping noise, which is transmitted through the piping and can be heard in some sections of the house. If the sounds are coming from the circulator bearings, replace the circulator.

Circulator pump bearings should be lubricated at least once a year with motor oil, typically sold at hardware stores. Newer circulator pump motors, however, are usually permanently lubricated.



Make home safer: On window products where the cord ends in a loop (1), cut the cord above the tassel, remove the equalizer buckle and add a separate tassel at the end of each cord. For two-cord pleated or cellular shades (2 and 3), leave the cord stop in place near the headrail, but the cord above the tassel and add a separate tassel at the end of each cord. Since another loop will appear when the shades are raised, keep the cord out of the reach of children. For vertical blinds, continuous loop systems and drapery cords (4, 5 and 6), a cord tie-down device should be permanently attached to the floor, wall or window jamb to keep the cord tight when not in use.

Decorating baby's room for safety as well as looks

You've picked out the color scheme, nursery lamp and comforter for baby's room. Everything looks perfect, but is it safe? According to child safety experts, the most frequently overlooked hazard in a baby's room is the window.

Although parents may be tempted to place a crib near a window so that the baby can see outdoors, they forget about the potential danger of a child falling out the window. Children can fall from windows that are opened as little as five inches, and a crib or other furniture placed beneath a window can easily serve as an unintended step to the window ledge.

Even if a window is permanently sealed to prevent falls,

the blinds, drapes or other coverings that decorate the window can pose a potential hazard.

According to the Widow Covering Safety Council, nearly a dozen infants and young children accidentally become entangled and strangled in the looped pull cords of window blinds and shades every year. Frequently, the window cord was dangling within reach of the baby's crib.

Although newer window blinds and shades are increasingly incorporating no-loop designs and other safety measures, millions of older window coverings still have looped cords. Fortunately, it's simple to make these looped-cord win-

dow coverings safe for a baby.

Most blinds and shades can be fixed simply by cutting the cord loop just above the pull tassel and placing separate tassels at the ends of the resulting two cords.

For vertical blinds or drapes that need a continuous loop to operate, a cord tie-down device that pulls the loop taut and secures it to the floor or wall is recommended.

Both replacement tassels and tie-down devices are available at no charge by calling 1-800-508-4638.

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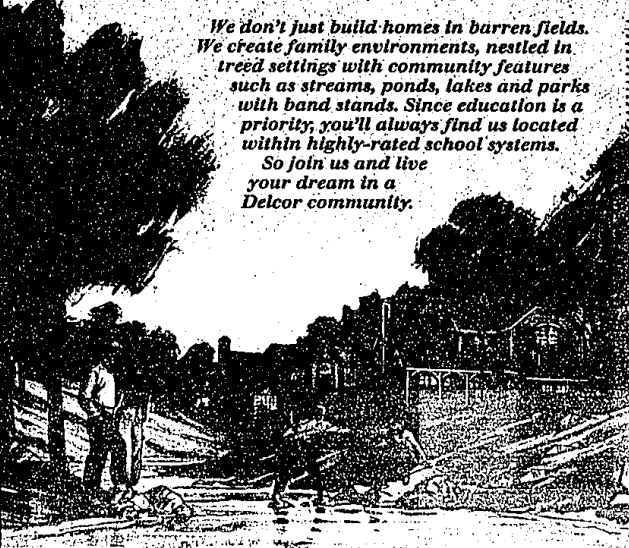
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