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appliance doctor

What you can do during brownout



JOE GAGNON

I had just returned from a five day vacation in California and had sat down to read my collected newspapers when the headlines jumped out and caught my attention.

Detroit Edison does not have enough energy to pass out to every home and is therefore cutting back on the amount of voltage they're sending across the wires.

This is an old problem going back to the 1970s, which now resurfaces with some brand new admissions.

Back in the old days, it was very hard for Edison to admit that any home was not being supplied with the correct voltage. It was also a very common occurrence that a refrigerator compressor was burned up because of a low-voltage condition and be darned if anyone would accept responsibility.

The consumer usually had to foot the bill, and it wasn't cheap to have a compressor replaced.

I have read the stories and the many numerous comments made about deregulation and new energy sources becoming available, and, quite honestly, I don't give a darn.

I am interested only in the fact that the proper voltage be supplied to my home, and I don't care where it comes from.

I admire Edison for being up front with its information and for admitting its shortcomings. I would rather see it shut off the power completely to any given neighborhood in order to maintain enough voltage to most homes.

Better still, I would ask that every homeowner where no one is home during the day, shut off the air conditioning until someone gets home at the end of the day.

As you well know, that figure could

amount to several hundred thousand homes.

It only takes a short while before the comfort of air conditioning is realized by the homeowner.

Low-voltage conditions to a home can cause some serious and costly problems.

When you see light bulbs that are suddenly not bright enough and television pictures that are changed from the norm, it is time for you to shut off these products.

Motors, compressors and electronics are designed to operate on 110 volts, and even a simple drop of 10 volts can damage these products beyond reasonable repairs.

I would even bet you that the compressors of the 1970s could better take the brunt of a brownout compared to the compressors being made today.

If your compressor fails today, will you be able to prove that it was a low-voltage condition that caused it, or was it just a plain part failure that occurred naturally? Will Detroit Edison participate in the cost of replacement?

Detroit Edison admits in front page headlines that it is having a problem. It is now up to you to respond in such a fashion as to prevent damage to your appliances.

Shut off these appliances until voltage conditions to your home have returned to normal.

And let every person who reads this column shut off his central air conditioning while he is at work, and, guess what?

Edison won't have a problem and neither will we.

Joe Gagnon, the Appliance Doctor, will answer your questions about maintaining and repairing large appliances. Gagnon is president of Carmack Appliances in Garden City and does a weekly radio program on WJR-AM.

Free guide helps identify trees

"What Tree Is That?", a pocket guide for identifying trees, is available from the National Arbor Day Foundation.

The free, 72-page guide will help you identify 135 different trees found in the Eastern and Central United States.

To obtain the guide, send your name and address to "What Tree Is That?",

National Arbor Day Foundation, 100 Arbor Avenue, Nebraska City, Neb. 68410.

Dozens of drawings illustrate the trees' leaves or needles and their acorns, berries, seed pods, cones, etc. The guide is organized to make it easy to identify trees in a simple, step-by-step fashion.