

HOME WORK

Attorney general threatens suit over ad

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

worse than outdoor air and the role that ductwork plays in your home.

When homeowners need to get their air ducts cleaned, they should have qualified people do the work or they might just be wasting money. Homeowners can expect to spend \$300-\$400 to have a typical three-bedroom home cleaned of dust and debris. Within the air duct cleaning profession, sometimes there are certain unethical practices that occur. I caution homeowners who use some companies which

■ Homeowners can expect to spend \$300-\$400 to have a typical three-bedroom home cleaned of dust and debris. Within the air duct cleaning profession, sometimes there are certain unethical practices that occur.

advertise prices that are too good to be true.

Michigan Attorney General Jennifer Granholm has filed a notice of intended action against Healthy-Air Power Vacuum of Utica in which she accuses the company of using deceptive methods in its advertising. In her notice, Granholm alleged that Healthy-Air has represented in advertisements in the Ameritech Yellow Pages to the public that the company is certified by the National Air Duct Cleaners Association and is licensed by the state when it is

not certified by the association or licensed by the state.

The Michigan Consumer Protection Act, written in the 1970s, is still the measure used by Granholm in these kinds of cases. There is a statement in the Act that says, "unfair, unconscionable, or deceptive methods, acts, or practices in the conduct of trade or commerce are unlawful." The act defines these methods as "causing a probability of confusion or misunderstanding" as to the approval or certification of services.

With this notice, the Attorney General now gives Healthy-Air a 10-day period to respond in a positive manner. If the company fails to do so, Granholm will file a lawsuit and they may be fined, up to \$25,000 for each violation. I'll let you know what happens.

I hope this column has helped you understand how the system works. (Have you noticed the attention received by the attorney general's office these last few years? I think it's deserving.) I hope the attorney general continues to work for the causes of the

little guy like you and I.

One quick question for you though. What about the advertisement in the Yellow Pages for this Healthy-Air company? It will continue to be for the next several months and not everyone will read this column will be aware of what has happened.

Don't the people who put these telephone books together check out the information they put into their ads? The almighty Yellow Pages is an advertising format where a lot of people make and create a whole bunch of money. It is not a Bible and I wonder how many people who work there screen the information that your fingers will find. Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can be heard on WJR-AM 760 every Saturday and Sunday mornings. He is a past president of the Society of Consumer Professionals. His second book, "The Words and Wisdom of The Appliance Doctor" is available in book stores. His telephone number is (313) 873-9789.

Use a brush or sponge to clean your screens

BY JAMES AND MORRIS CAREY
FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Spring is an important time of year for home dwellers. It's when we get a chance to shake the winter dust out of our pillows and mattresses and begin the process of cleaning our home inside and out. If you have a regular routine, the process can be easier and even fun.

We have a pressure washer that makes cleaning everything outside a breeze. We use it to clean spider webs from beneath the eaves, dirt from the walls - especially at the trim over doors and windows, screens, doors, patios and walks, patio furniture, the barbecue, statuary and more.

The trick is to start high and work down. Begin at the roofline and work your way to the ground. Start at one corner of the house and work your way around. Don't use too much pressure. You won't want that powerful spray to take any point off. Be sure to use detergent with the pressure washer. Most have a feature that mixes cleaners and other concoctions into the pressurized spray.

A pressure washer will do a good job by itself, but the addition of detergent and a little elbow grease will result in a cleaner, brighter result. If you have a one-story home, a short pole with a scrub brush on the end will allow you to do most of the cleaning with both feet planted squarely on the ground.

This is the one time of year when you will appreciate having a full hip roof. That's the kind that has an overhang all the way around. You can reach everything that needs cleaning with your feet on the ground. If not, you will need a ladder or scaffolding of some kind to reach additional stories or

those areas where the siding is farther from the ground - like at dormers, cupolas or gable ends. A gable wall is where the wall extends up to the peak.

Tip: Someone once told us that the only difference between a single-story home and its multistory counterpart was the stairs. Granted stairs are good exercise, but, if you have a choice, get a treadmill instead. Owning a single story home is significantly more cost-effective. Take for example the cost of maintenance. Everything you do to maintain a multistory home costs more.

Once you've pulled out the pressure washer, there are a couple of things that you'll need to be careful with including screens, foliage and fabrics.

Whether your screens are made of copper, steel, aluminum or nylon, you will need to use caution during cleaning. Older metal screens have a tendency to rip and - old or new - aluminum and nylon screens can easily be stretched out of shape. And, they don't bounce back.

Once a screen is stretched, it stays that way. After the screen has been removed, lay it on a flat surface and wet it thoroughly. Use a sponge of soft bristle scrub brush to wash both sides.

While the screen is drying, clean the window frame and wash and dry the window itself. If you don't have a pressure washer, use a stiff bristle brush to clean the grooves and tracks in the frame.

Plants and shrubs should be protected during the cleaning. Press window stakes into the ground around fragile plants and drape a lightweight plastic cover over the stakes.

For more home improvement tips, visit the Web site at www.onthehouse.com

■ Got a story idea for the At Home section? Know of an extraordinary remodeling or interior design project? Call Ken Abramczyk, At Home Editor, at (734) 953-2112 or e-mail kabramczyk@oe.homecomm.net

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