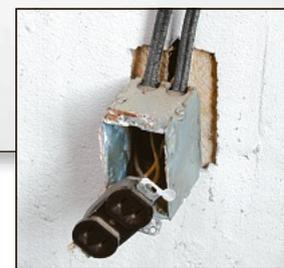


New Year's Resolutions

By Dan Howard
for TRIB TOTAL MEDIA

*We look to the New Year for a fresh start and better times.
Why not include our homes in that time of renewal?
What catches us off guard is that things often wear out a little
at a time. The extension cords rubs a little, moves a little and
three years later has bare exposed wires that can start a fire.
That process happens with every part of our home.*



Make your Home a Safer Place

Everyone knows to install and regularly check the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. It is important enough that it needs said again.

Walk through your home and check for water leaks and mold. These can sneak up on any homeowner. That tiny leak can cause a big mold problem over time. The earlier leaks are found, the less damage they cause and the easier they are to correct.

Have the radon checked in your home. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer and South Western PA area has over a 50% failure rate.

Check your clothes dryer vent for blockage. Blocked vents can also cause the dryer

heater component to overheat and fail. At best a lint blockage in the dryer vent can cost you a couple of hundred dollars in appliance repairs. On the other hand, dryer vent pipe blockage is a leading cause of fires and carbon monoxide in the home.

We live in a world of chemicals. Some to clean, some to make things smell, some to make things work better and others to make our homes look pretty. Many of the chemicals can make some of us very ill.

Check the bottles and cans in cleaning closets for leakage. Remove chemicals such as pesticides, paint thinner and gasoline from inside of your home and garage. Storage in an exterior yard shed is a safe

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alternative.

Have your furnace cleaned and serviced each year. Hire a furnace company that also checks for carbon monoxide and natural gas leaks.

If you have and use a fireplace, have the chimney cleaned and checked each year before use. Check every heating appliance for safety, especially the portable heaters.

Consider having a home inspection. We usually only consider these when purchas-

ing a home, but having a home checked for safety by a professional can be a good thing while you are still living there. It also could be a great gift for a senior or

other family member not able to keep up with their home maintenance.

There are over 200 million appliances that have been recalled. Check for recalls to avoid fires or save major appliance repair or replacement. You can check www.CPSC.gov or use a fee based data base entry service to list and automatically recheck your appliances each month such as: www.appliancerecallcheck.com

for Your Home



Prepare a Plan for Disaster

A natural disaster or serious world event could leave us unable to pick up our cell phone and find our families. Massive power or communication failures are no longer only a possibility in science fiction. These failures have become a possible means of terrorism.

It takes moments to plan locations for a family to meet if communication systems fail. There should be a local place and one outside of the area. It could be a landmark or the home of a relative. It takes moments to discuss and decide where to meet if things go terribly awry.

Create an Emergency Kit. Food, fuel and light are critical for survival. Take a moment and consider all of the items that will not work without power and create an alternate plan. The best resource for creating emergency kits is www.Ready.gov. They have many sample lists designed for a wide range of needs such as families, se-

niors, businesses and many other groups.

Without electricity, the Automatic Teller Machine will not spit out money into your hand no matter how much money is in your account or how many times you ask. Keep some cash on hand in a safe place.

Take a picture or a video of your home's furnishings and its contents. It is a reality that disasters can occur in any home, even yours. It could be a fire, flood or major theft, but each of these disasters require documentation of the home and its contents for insurance recovery.

Once you have the pictures or video of your home, store a copy of that information "off site." You can upload them to a cloud service or simply hand a digital copy to a close friend or relative. The object here is to avoid losing your backup pictures in the disaster they were taken for recovery.

Improve Your Home's Environment

These suggestions will make you feel better in your home. It is your castle and should be the very best it can be. Ironically, your castle should be a lot more comfortable than a real castle.

Take a couple of weekends and pick from the list of chores that can make your home healthier and more pleasant.

- Streamline and de-clutter
- Install "daylight" type light bulbs
- Give away unused "stuff"
- Clean the rubber gasket at the door of front loading clothes washers
- Replace appliance filters
- Run a dehumidifier in damp areas
- Ventilate bathrooms, kitchens, attics and basements
- Identify and remove things with bad odors

As a final suggestion, walk through and look at what is inside of your home. We are talking about your pictures, furnishings, clothes or even paint colors. If what you see conjures up bad memories or feelings: get rid of it! If you notice something that is hidden away that makes you feel good, get it out where you can see it. Now! That can be a wonderful New Years gift to yourself.

Go to www.envirospect.info/NewYearsResolution for links and sources for information in the article.



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