

How to replace energy-hungry appliances

Home improvement projects often involve remodeling. But homeowners can improve their homes without ever picking up a hammer. Upgrading a home's appliances with products that are more eco-friendly can add value to a home and make the home more attractive to buyers who want their homes to look good and pay dividends for the environment.

The United States Department of Energy says the average American family spends about \$2,200 each year for energy costs, and large, inefficient appliances no doubt contribute heavily to those expenditures. Appliances that are several years old, including refrigerators, washing machines, dryers, and even ovens, may no longer meet the stringent energy-saving specifications required of new items. That means such appliances are negatively affecting the environment and their owners' bottom lines.

According to the Energy Star program, a refrigerator that is at least 15 years old may be consuming twice as much energy as a newer Energy Star-rated refrigerator. Even though purchasing new appliances will require a financial commitment, such items may help save money while benefitting the environment at the same time.

Read the label

Familiarize yourself with the "EnergyGuide" label that appears on most appliances. This label gives consumers an idea as to how much it will cost to run the appliance, as well as how much energy the unit uses on average. Use this label to compare the different models you are considering.

Choose appliances that are part of the Energy Star program, which helps consumers find products that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Downgrade to a small model

Large appliances tend to consume more energy than small appliances. Scaling down the size of the appliance can reduce energy consumption. Empty nesters may no longer need a refrigerator capable of holding food for a family of four, while those who routinely dine out may find they don't get much use out of their larger refrigerator.

Look for rebate programs

Rebate and recycling programs can help reduce the initial cost of purchasing new appliances. The government may offer tax incentives to those people who purchase a new, energy-efficient model.

Think about future salability

Homeowners who do not intend to stay in their homes much longer may find energy efficient appliances make their homes more attractive to prospective buyers.

Energy efficient appliances can reduce homeowners' carbon footprints while also saving them considerable amounts of money over the life of the products.



Is it time to update your home's electrical system?

The invisible systems in a home often are taken for granted. When such systems are working as expected, daily life moves along smoothly. However, when a system goes awry, it can negatively impact routines and may create a dangerous home environment. This is especially true when something goes wrong with a home's electrical system.

Faulty wiring is a leading cause of residential fires. Many homeowners, particularly those who live in older

homes, might be living in properties that have outdated electrical systems. The experts at Lowes ProServices state that having old wiring and/or insufficient amperage in a house can endanger residents. It also may damage appliances and make it difficult to sell a property in the future.

It can be difficult to gauge exactly when to overhaul an electrical system. Unless circuits routinely trip or lights often dim, homeowners may put off the work. But degrading wires or

overextended circuitry can pose a fire risk, so it is best to address electrical systems promptly.

Home inspections may uncover electrical problems. Some homeowners may discover potential trouble while making renovations that require opening up walls or tearing them down, exposing the wires. Still other homeowners learn about electrical systems when they're adding new, large appliances or other gadgets that consume more power than existing items. These devices may

continually cause power outages in the house, such as tripping the circuit breaker or popping a fuse.

When it comes time to update the electrical system, it is always best to work with licensed and bonded electricians who have the expertise to work with electrical wiring without getting injured. This is not a do-it-yourself type of job since it requires specialized training.

Electricians likely will see **ELECTRICAL** page 7

Did you know?

Rain barrels provide an eco-friendly opportunity to repurpose rain water while helping homeowners conserve water and save money. But homeowners must exercise caution when using rain barrels in their lawns and gardens. Water collected by rain water should never be used for drinking, cooking or bathing. Pet owners should know that water collected by rain barrels also should not be used to bathe pets. Rain barrel lids should also be tightly secured to prevent mosquito infestations. Secure rain barrels to also protect children and pets from falling in. Overflow valves should always direct water away from structures to prevent water damage to homes or sheds. In addition, to reduce risk of falls and injury, homeowners should be certain that water is not directed toward sidewalks, driveways or other areas where foot traffic is common. Before the arrival of winter, homeowners should disconnect their rain barrels from downspouts to prevent the formation of ice.

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