HOME IMPROVEMENT

Signs that your home needs attention

Roof wear and tear

that is noticeable from the indoors. It may include a browned spot on the ceiling or even pooling water in the attic.

• If the roof is sagging, it could be due to excess loads, such as water-damaged shingles or even weakened roof structure.

• It is likely that shingles will have to be replaced if there is cracking or if shingles are buckling and warping.

• Exposed nails may rust and contribute to a leaky roof. How long the nails were exposed could indicate if the roof can be repaired or if everything should be redone.

• Over time asphalt granules will slowly degrade and fall off. If there are many granules in gutters or

if one can see that portions of the shingles are bare, it is likely time for a new roof.

• Mold and mildew on the roof is a sign that the roof needs to be repaired or replaced. Such growths contribute to rot that jeopardizes the integrity of the roof.

A malfunctioning septic system

• Water and sewage from toilets, drains and sinks is backing up into the home

• Bathtubs, showers and sinks drain very slowly

• Gurgling sounds are coming from the plumbing system

• Standing water or damp spots near the septic tank or drain field

• Bad odors around the septic tank or drain field

• Bright green, spongy lush grass over the septic tank or drain field, even during dry weather

• Algae blooms in nearby ponds or lakes

• High levels of nitrates or coliform bacteria in water wells

Heating, ventilation and air conditioning

• If the HVAC system is more than 10 years old, it could be time to begin budgeting for a new unit.

• A system that is turning on repeatedly or having to run for awhile before the set temperature is reached could be nearing the end of its utility.

• Groaning, banging or loud humming noises should be addressed.

• Higher than usual electricity or gas bills likely mean the HVAC system isn't working efficiently and might need to be replaced.

• If the home is dusty or humid or even if allergies seem to have cropped up out of nowhere, this could indicate a poorly functioning HVAC system.

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When disaster strikes

Knowing how to proceed effectively in an emergency can make a world of difference and potentially save lives.

• Accidental falls: The CDC says that falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injury among nearly every age group. Falls can be prevented by removing tripping hazards, installing steady handrails and other supports and adding lighting in and around a home. If a fall should occur, stabilize the limb or injured area of the body and seek medical assistance.

• **Kitchen fires:** The potential for danger exists whenever cooking with heat or over open flames. Never use water to put out a grease fire - it will only spread it. Cover the fire with a lid to suffocate the flames, or use baking soda to douse the fire. Always have an all-purpose fire extinguisher on hand, and know how to operate it.

• **Burst pipes:** Burst pipes or leaking plumbing can quickly cause major damage. Locate the water main, which is usually in the basement or garage on the "street side" near the water meter. Turn off the main to save the home and your wallet. Make the water main visible, mark which way is off, and instruct others on how to use it.

• **Tipping furniture:** Tip-over incidents send thousands of people (especially young children) to emergency rooms each year, says the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. Top-heavy dressers, TV stands and televisions, desks, and bookcases should be anchored to the wall.

• Unintentional poisoning: Call 9-1-1 if the victim is unconscious or not breathing. If the person is alert, consult with the American Association of Poison Control Centers at 1-800-222-1222 for instructions. Keep the bottle or packaging of the assumed poison on hand to give information.

• Fire or other danger: Residents should designate emergency exits that are the quickest and safest ways out of every room in the house. Practice this plan and pick a specific meeting spot outside.

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Overwintering your houseplants

ool weather brings less daylight and houseplants may need to be relocated closer to windows. However, it's important that there's ample distance between the plant and the window. Keep them close enough to the windows to get ample sunlight but far enough away so they don't get too cold. Move plants away from drafty windows and heating vents, extreme temperatures are not good for houseplants.

Watering needs also change when temperatures drop. Houseplant growth slows down and that means less watering since overwatering in winter can be especially harmful to indoor plants. Try decreasing the frequency of watering by half each winter and see how the plants respond. Dust settles on leaves and inhibits a plant's ability to photosynthesize. Gently wiping leaves with a moist paper towel is all that's needed.

Fall Home Improvement is continued on page 23

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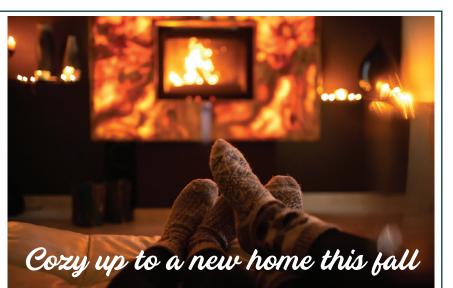
Staging is a key to selling

Certain areas of a home are more likely to draw the interest of prospective buyers when a house goes on the market. When that day comes, many realtors and homeowners rely on staging to make a home as attractive as possible during an open house or appointment viewing. According to a 2019 report from the

National Association of Realtors, staging the living room is most important for buyers, with 47 percent of buyers indicating a well-staged living room had an effect on their view of the home. The owner's suite (42 percent) and the kitchen (35 percent) were found to be the next most important rooms to stage. Though the report is generally concerned with selling a home, the



conclusions in the report are something renovation-minded homeowners can keep in mind. If prospective buyers are most impressed by well-staged living rooms, owner's' suites and kitchens, it stands to reason that those same rooms, when well-designed and recently renovated, will elicit a positive reaction if homeowners decide to sell in the future.



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