

## Inside This Issue:

A Tiny Cash Machine  
Raining Inside Your Home?  
Mercury Contamination

Smart and simple ways to enrich your home living

# HOMEXPERT



## MoneyWise

### Wasting Money and Water Can Be a Pain in the Drain

A glass of water in a restaurant may come for free, but water use in your home comes at a price.

Taking a few small steps to conserve water can help you save big. The Department of Energy offers several recommendations:

**Fix Leaks.** The sound of dripping is annoying and expensive, with one drip per second typically costing \$1 per month. Repair leaks in fixtures and pipes.

**Install Low-Flow Fixtures.** Quality, low-flow fixtures can be quite inexpensive, while achieving water savings of 25%-60%.

**Wash Dishes Efficiently.** Hand-washing dishes does not necessarily save hot water. An energy-efficient dishwasher when properly used and operating with full loads can consume less energy than washing dishes by hand several times a day.

When available, use shorter cycles to reduce hot water use. Plus, save by not using the heat-dry, rinse-hold and pre-rinse features.



**Wash Clothes Efficiently.** Use either cold or warm water, and always use cold water for rinsing. In the case of aging appliances, an old washer can cost three times as much to operate as an energy-efficient one.

**Lower Water Heater Thermostat.** Reduce water heating costs by lowering the thermostat setting on your water heater. Each 10°F reduction in water temperature saves between 3%-5% in energy costs. Reducing water temperature to 120°F also slows mineral buildup and corrosion in water heaters and pipes.

**Replace Water Heater.** The average life span of a water heater is between 8 and 12 years. Energy use can be cut considerably by replacing with a newer, more efficient model. Plus, you could also avoid the mess and inconvenience of an untimely breakdown.

Give us a call for an inspection of your systems. We can help you shave dollars off your utility bills every month.



## MyWord



### Take a Breather

By Rob Basnett

Hello Friends,

Whew! I'm breathing a sigh of relief as the last days of a scorching Summer move into the pleasant weather of Fall.

This is the time to breathe in the fresh, cool air outside – while taking a breather from the emergencies our customers faced all Summer long.

Believe me, we're glad to help, and we'll be here when you've got emergencies this Winter. But because the plumbing system can get hit pretty hard in the cold weather months, you might want to consider an "ounce of prevention" – before "a pound of plumbing cure" becomes necessary.

So, how about giving us a call to schedule a plumbing inspection this Fall? We can take a look at all parts of your plumbing system and pinpoint any areas that are under strain. These areas could feel even more pressure during a season known for large family gatherings and increased indoor activity.

We'll also be glad to talk to you about the potential for frozen pipes and how best to prepare.

In the meantime, enjoy this great season. For many it's a time of school  
*continued on page 4*

HomeXpert  
is published  
for friends of



Your **Quik Call** Comfort Hotline:  
**978-486-3767**



## HomeWise

### As the Mercury Rises, So Do the Risks

Mercury, also known as “quick silver”, is found in many household items, such as thermometers. You may not be aware, however that this poisonous element is also found in your home thermostat (more about this in a moment). When disposed of improperly, mercury contamination can occur, causing damage to the nervous system, kidneys, and other organs.

In an effort to reduce mercury contamination and its harmful effects, the Covanta Waste-to-Energy plant has been partnering with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection in a program called the Material Separation Plan. The program uses a coordinator to work with communities to separate mercury-containing products for proper disposal.

The program includes 5 steps for involved areas:

#### 1. Making the community aware.

Advertising, print media, and community speaking events are being used to educate the public on the

dangers of mercury contamination and how to help stop it.

#### 2. Mercy product collection events.

With 4 events per town, community members have the



*The best protection against mercury contamination is awareness.*

opportunity to bring in their mercury products. Businesses who return a large number of fluorescent bulbs can be reimbursed up to 50% by Covanta.

#### 3. Thermometer swaps.

Conducted at senior centers, local fairs, and during flu clinics, thermometer swaps allow citizens to replace mercury thermometers with a free digital replacement. Permanent

locations for this are situated also in all Covanta communities.

#### 4. Working with tradesmen.

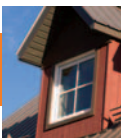
This is where your thermometer comes into play. When a heating specialist, air conditioning mechanic, or plumber changes 10 or more he can ask for a pickup for recycling and receive \$5 for each thermostat.

#### 5. School inspections.

Some schools still have mercury within their buildings of which they are unaware. Covanta’s engineering firm can locate the mercury in the various classrooms, maintenance rooms, nurses’ office, kitchen, etc. and suggest removal and replacement with non-mercury items – at no cost to the schools.

For more information on mercy, drop-off locations, or other questions, visit [www.keepmercuryfromrising.org](http://www.keepmercuryfromrising.org) or call 978-241-3002 for your local Material Separation Plan Coordinator.

## HomeFront



### “Why is it Raining in My House”

#### and other practical questions that should’ve been asked *before* you bought your house

Buying a home can be an exciting time. But even when location, price, size and curb appeal are exactly to your liking, other “added extras” could be headed your way in the form of high repair bills or costly surprises.



A thorough evaluation of the home by a qualified home inspector prior to purchase is your best bet for protection and preparation. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, home inspectors:

- Evaluate the physical condition of the home, including the structure, construction and mechanical systems;
- Identify items that should be repaired or replaced;

- Estimate the remaining useful life of the major systems (such as electrical, plumbing, heating, air conditioning), equipment, structure and finishes.

Though it’s easy to confuse the two, a home inspection is not an appraisal. Appraisals give estimates of market value and are tools for lenders to use to authorize mortgage approval. Inspections are designed for potential buyers to make sure they know what they’re buying.

To find a qualified home inspector, check with state regulatory authorities, professional organizations, the Yellow Pages, internet searches, or your real estate agent.





## The Little Tiny Cash Machine On Your Wall

For many homeowners, knowledge of the inner workings of their home comfort systems begins and ends with the location of the thermostat. But not to worry: that's as good a place to start as any.

The thermostat is certainly not one of the most expensive parts to your system, but its far-reaching effects make it perhaps the most vital. Many heating problems are actually thermostat problems. Yet they can usually be easily remedied, including common problems like these:

- **Incorrect temperature readings.** This could be caused by something as simple as dirt or a location.
- **Cycling issues.** If the system is cycling too often (or infrequently), it could be time to adjust the thermostat differential control.

Thermostats are divided generally into two main types – electronic and conventional. Of these, the conventional model works well for people who like an easy-to-use, non-technological setup and tend to maintain regular schedules. The electronic types, however, offer homeowners more control at different times of the day, while also serving as a more sensitive gauge of temperature.

### Get With the Program

The electronic types also come in programmable models that can save big on energy use during the height of cold weather.

You can preset the temperature to fall to a lower level after you've

gone to bed, but kick the heat higher before the alarm goes off in the morning. Or you can choose a similar setting for time spent away during the day.



Weekends can have their own schedule.

By using your home comfort system more efficiently, you could also

see real results in lower energy bills.

Home comfort systems with multiple heating and cooling zones can be operated with either type of ther-

mostat. But certainly programmable electronic thermostats offer the greater potential to set each area for ultimate comfort – keying in on the right place at the right time.

### Choose Wisely

When choosing between conventional and electronic models, homeowners tend to weigh between ease of use and lower initial cost versus greater control, added comfort and potential energy savings. Make sure you evaluate the benefits carefully – especially when choosing a programmable thermostat.

Give us a call to discuss a compatible choice for your home comfort system.

## Household Trivia



1. In 1902 when a Brooklyn printer complained of warped paper, the “Apparatus for Treating Air” was introduced by Willis Carrier. Air conditioning gradually spread beyond the industrial world, but was not available for residential use until what year?  
A. 1928                      B. 1917                      C. 1941
2. Sir Isaac Newton is still remembered as the man who “discovered” gravity when an apple fell from a tree and hit him in his head. In another famous experiment, what scientist used a steel spike and silk kite in his “discovery” of electricity?  
A. Thomas Edison            B. Benjamin Franklin      C. Alexander Graham Bell
3. Insects, water stagnation, and a certain “unpleasant” taste were several problems that arose in the early years of indoor plumbing. All of these side effects are associated with what material used for plumbing pipes?  
A. Wood                      B. Iron                      C. Steel
4. The “Silent Valveless Water Waste Preventer” (what a great name) was the first toilet that could effectively flush when the tank was only half full. It was invented in 1898 and the patent rights were sold and heavily marketed by none other than...  
A. Mae Flush            B. Thomas A. Crapper      C. Porsa Lynn      D. Larry Tate

## MyWord



continued from page 1

days, football games and busy family schedules. When you look back, it's usually "the ordinary routine" that brings the best moments of life. So make the most of it every day. And if you can, there's still time to get in a few outdoor activities before the cold weather kicks in!

Wishing you the best and looking forward to visiting you in your home soon.

Sincerely,

Rob Basnett

P.S. We hope you'll enjoy the great home tips that come in this newsletter, but don't forget to check out the super discounts on services you'll find on this page. If you aren't able to use them, feel free to pass them on to friends. After all, your friends are our friends, and we'd love to help them out too!

### HomePoints

If you have a garbage disposal in your kitchen, grind ice cubes to clean and lemon peels to freshen.

## Let us Repair what Your Husband Fixed.

We know how it is. All you have to do is jiggle this, juggle that... and voilà! It's worse than before. A question crosses your mind: "Now what do I do?" The answer is simple. Call one of our trained professionals.

We'll help you out of your plumbing mess as quickly as possible. And we might even maintain a little peace (or pride) in the process. (No extra charge!) Just give us a call.

**Basnett Plumbing & Heating, Inc.**  
978-486-3767

©2006



"I really need to get into some hot water. Like now."

Believe me, we understand. Water heaters wear out, just like all appliances.

Over time, rust and sediment slowly reduce your heater's performance. If you wait too long and the tank or burner rusts out, *big costly problems* can result.

**Avoid cold showers or a costly mess.**

We can check your heater or – if you choose – upgrade you to a top-quality water heater that's guaranteed to keep you in hot water.

Call Basnett Plumbing & Heating, Inc. at 978-486-3767.

©2006

## APPROACHING ICE AGE

That's what winter feels like sometimes. You come inside to warm up, but your old system is wheezing in its futile attempts. Don't put any more strain on your heating system, or you're asking for an expensive repair – or to be left out in the cold.

Give us a quick call,  
before you pass out...

**978-486-3767**

Let us come out to give you a Free Home Energy Survey and Health Check on your system. We can tell you how much a new one can save you. And if your system is over about 8 years old, you're in for a shock. You may save more than you'd spend for a complete new system!



©2006

Trivia Answers: 1. A, 2. B, 3. A, 4. B

P.O. Box 1425 • Littleton, MA 01460



If your mailing label is not correct, please call us!

# HOME XPERT