

On the House

With the Carey Brothers
Tips of the Month



Outdoor Holiday Lights

Are you one of those fanatics who puts up so many outdoor Christmas lights that jet planes think your house is a runway? Remember Chevy Chase's house in *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*? In the movies, decorating disasters are funny. At your house, safety is no laughing matter. Here are a few things you can do to make sure your holidays are safe. First, never use indoor lights outside. Only use UL-approved exterior lights. Stay off the roof to avoid falls and causing leaks. Suspend lights from hangers rather than nailing or stapling. The latter practice can cut into wires, creating shocks, shorts and hazards. Putting too many strands together can cause overheating and a fire. Overloaded circuits can blow fuses and trip circuit breakers. A little decorating common sense will make your home a safe showplace this holiday season.

Alka-Seltzer as a Cleaner

Got a clogged drain or a toilet that needs cleaning? Do you have pots and pans with burned-on grease? Did a bee just sting you? Grab an Alka-Seltzer; in fact, grab a handful. To clean a toilet, drop in two Alka-Seltzer tablets, wait 20 minutes, brush and flush. The citric acid and effervescent action cleans vitreous china sparkling clean. In water, it cleans jewelry. It unclogs drains when three tablets in water are followed by some white vinegar. Two tablets will clean gooey flower vases, and a tablet wrapped in a moist cloth will soothe insect bites. Oh, and it's also great for easing an upset stomach. Plop plop, fizz fizz, oh what a relief it is!

Clothes Dryer Maintenance

When was the last time you checked your dryer duct to make sure that it isn't clogged with lint? It's something you should be doing regularly. A lint-clogged dryer duct is one of the leading causes of residential fires (due to excessive heat build-up). In electric dryers, too much heat can also trigger the thermal-temperature fuse, a one-time shutdown device that only a pro can replace. You can also trigger it by opening the door and stopping mid-cycle, because the heaters below are red hot. Always turn the dial to air-dry before opening. Clean lint screens and exhaust vents often. Heat build-up wastes time and money — and sometimes lives. Be both lint-free and worry-free.

Septic Tank Reminder

While a septic tank processes waste to some degree, it needs pumping out every four to five years, or so. You don't remember the last time you had this done? Then you'd better call in a pro to check it out. Before you do, know the location of your tank and the drain field connected to it. The number of trucks that have fallen into or damaged a septic tank while delivering materials or pumping it out are many — and not funny.

Ask the Carey Brothers a home improvement or remodeling question on their live radio broadcast every Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Call toll-free at 1-800-737-2474 to ask your question.

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