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HOMESENSE

Smart and simple ways to enrich your home living



ConsumerWatch

MyWord



What Goes Up Must Come Down

It's a law of physics – and economics – that not even the strongest markets can defy. We saw it when the “dot com” bubble burst in the face of too much growth, too quickly. And now we have a ring-side seat for history repeating itself, this time in the housing sector.

One of the sectors hardest hit by the mortgage crisis is the new construction and commercial sectors of the building industry. Banks are increasingly leery of extending mortgage loans which means new home and development construction is grinding to a halt. But the contractors operating those businesses still have to work, just like the rest of us. So what does this have to do with you specifically?

Well, many of those contractors are quietly slipping into the residential home comfort service business. While that in and of itself isn't a bad thing, it *does* pose serious issues for you as a homeowner. That's why there are certain guidelines you should always use before allowing



anyone to service your heating and cooling equipment:

Credentials – Be sure to check references and inquire about timeliness, job performance, and overall satisfaction of results. The best question you can usually ask is, “Would you hire them again?”

Technical Skill – You'll learn more about a company by asking specific questions about training policies and experience requirements for hiring than by almost anything else they say.

Guarantees – Most companies “say” they guarantee their work but sadly, the words often get conveniently forgotten if a problem arises. And that's the only time you'll know... or care. Without a guarantee on parts and labor, you may have another system breakdown and be expected to pay the same price to have it fixed *again*.

Remember, you are calling a contractor because you either have a problem, or you want to prevent one. It's our job to solve those problems – not add to them. So give us a call and we'll be happy to save you time, money, and quite possibly a few gray hairs.

Foul & Fair Weather Friend

By Bill Russell

Dear Friends,

Well, here we are again. The temperatures are a little warmer, and signs of spring are starting to find their way into the neighborhoods.

If you're like me, you enjoy the start of a new season. The change of scenery does us all good. We have a chance to catch our breath as winter gray fades into a cool breeze across a budding landscape. But not for long... because then it's back to work for you!

Yes, we're more than just the foul weather friend you call on in the heat and cold. We're here for fair weather, too!

In any change of season, we want to make sure we get our top customers ready for the days ahead, and the milder months are a good time for tending to matters that most people put on the back burner during the year.

So, while your furnace is starting to get some rest, and your air conditioner hasn't yet been put to the test, let us give your system a pre-season check. Just think of it as a little “spring cleaning.”

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Fitting the Flow Of Modern Life...In the Bathroom

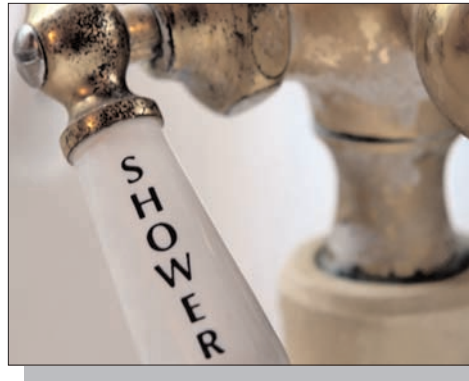
What's the latest in bathroom trends? A few themes have been emerging in recent years:

Showers are the new tubs - Though garden tubs in master baths have been the rage in new home construction for awhile, busy homeowners have started to ask, "Who's got time to soak in the tub?" While the functionality of showers takes on more attention, look for lots more options than the single showerhead behind a vinyl curtain.

Spa-like features include multi-functioning shower-heads, multiple body sprays, hand showers with adjustable jets - all for immersion, massaging and relaxation.

A flush beats a full house - The government called for low-flow toilets in new homes in the mid-

1990s because it was hard to argue with the numbers: they can save up to 22,000 gallons a year for a family of four. Homes with water-guzzling models built prior to that time are ripe for replacement. Plus,



you also have options now in faucet aerators and showerheads for even more water savings.

Safety is still first - The

bathroom is the site of 70% of accidents in the home, so follow these precautions. Minimize slips with non-skid bathmats in tubs or shower stalls and non-skid rugs on tile floors, and reduce the risk of falls with grab bars near the tub or shower or near the toilet. Many designs and finishes fit well with bath decor, fixtures and accessories.

Also, set your household water heater no higher than 120°F. And if you have an older shower system that produces "shower shock" - a temperature change following a water pressure change from a flushed toilet, new dishwasher cycle, etc. - consider installing a pressure-balanced shower valve to keep shower temperature consistent, comfortable and safe.

Let There Be Light

When Thomas Edison invented the incandescent bulb over 125 years ago, he probably didn't foresee a frenzy to outlaw his invention - especially in the 21st century. But it appears that the bulbs are facing a forced retirement as Congress rallies to ban them in the face of rising energy costs.

So what's the big deal?

Well, about 90% of the energy these bulbs create is wasted as heat. And when energy is wasted, your energy dollars are being wasted. That's why Congress is proposing a ban on incandescent bulbs by 2012. New light sources will be required to maintain at least a 70% efficiency standard, and so far the frontrunner for a replacement is the compact fluorescent bulb.



By changing just one incandescent bulb to fluorescent, homeowners can save up to \$50 in energy costs over the life of the bulb. The estimated savings for the United States is \$40 billion from 2012 to 2030. Plus, the switch can also cut carbon emissions by 51 million tons annually - a significant step in slowing global warming.

Australia, Ireland, Canada, and the European Union are in the process of instituting similar energy standards, making the possible implications of higher efficiency even greater.

See? Even the small things that we do add up to huge impacts for our planet. So do your part and let us help. Give us a call and we'll be happy to review your options for energy efficient lighting, plus share even more ways to help you save energy.

HomeFront





Tips for Handling Stress

Stress is a part of daily life, and it always will be unless we plan to stay out of traffic, get along well with everyone we know, greet monthly bills with joy, relish staff meetings, look forward to long lines in grocery stores, and delight in news coverage. Well, you get the picture.

To better handle the unavoidable frustrations of life, keep the following tips in mind:

- **Practice good habits -** Nothing helps keep stress in line more than following the age-old prescription of getting regular exercise, maintaining a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, limiting alcohol and quitting smoking.
- **Take a relaxation break -** During the middle of a busy day, taking a brief break can help you recharge your batteries. For example, watch the clouds float in the sky, count your blessings, or read an inspirational thought.
- **Release the tension -** Squeeze a stress ball for a few minutes. As your muscles relax, the tension releases. You can also try an easy yoga technique, such as breathing slowly. Focus your attention on your breath, making the out-breath twice as long as the in-breath.
- **Sip on something soothing -** Instead of soda or



coffee, drink green tea with theanine, which has relaxation-inducing qualities. Or choose black tea, which studies have shown to lower the stress hormone cortisol. Also, a glass of cold water can really get your blood moving too, while reducing the fatigue of dehydration.

- **Get organized -** The clutter in your house or on your desk can be a real energy zapper, while a clear work space clears your brain for good ideas.



- **Maintain a positive environment -** Remember “the power of positive thinking”? It makes sense that being positive helps with a good mental outlook. You, too, are influenced by attitudes and actions of others. Avoid those who wear you down with constant complaints and negativity.
- **Learn to say no -** We face many opportunities to say “yes” to worthwhile activities. But the true strength of purpose sometimes comes in saying no. Make good choices about how you spend your time, and learn to let go of activities that don’t fit your priorities.



GoingGreen

- Since almost 50% of the energy used in homes is for heating and cooling, by moving your thermostat down 2° in winter and up 2° in summer, you could save almost 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide.
- Planting a tree can absorb a ton of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere over the life of the tree, as well as reducing energy costs with its shade.
- Properly inflated tires can improve gas mileage by more than 3%, keeping 20 pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere for every gallon of gas saved.
- It takes 10 times more energy to produce frozen food than it does fresh food.
- Display clocks and memory chips account for 5% of domestic energy consumption and release 18 million tons of carbon emissions annually.

MyWord

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Or if you're overdue for a new system, the season between extreme cold and sweltering heat can be a great time for a great deal. So give us a call. We'll send our trained experts to evaluate your home's needs and give you our honest recommendations on the best equipment around.

Above all, we want you to be comfortable.

Looking forward to visiting you soon.

Sincerely,



Bill Russell

P.S. Check out the special offers on this page for some super discounts. We hope you'll be able to use them, but if you aren't, please feel free to pass them on to your friends. We'd love to help them out, too!

HomePoints

Replacing your air filters every 4-6 months reduces system strain, saves energy dollars, and reduces carbon emissions.

Some Things Are Just Better Au Naturel...

Like environment friendly Bio-Clean®. It destroys blockages and odors in your plumbing system naturally – and helps prevent future drainage problems.

But it's only available through your plumber. So call **Bill Russell Plumbing, Heat & Air Co.** at **918-742-6171** for your Bio-Clean® today.

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"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 **Bill Russell Plumbing, Heat & Air Co.** at 918-742-6171.

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GERM AQUARIUM, OPEN DAILY. PRICE OF ADMISSION: YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH



You wouldn't pay to expose your family to dangerous germs and bacteria. But if your toilet wobbles or isn't properly secured, that may be precisely what happens with every flush.

Germs and harmful wastes can seep into the air, causing illness and costing hundreds in medical bills.

And your old toilet can cost

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even more with the large amounts of water it uses to operate.

Save money and your family's health. Call us today for an inspection and replacement options.

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305 North Hickory Ave.
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma 74012-2328
(918) 742-6171, FAX (918) 258-4379
www.billrussellplumbing.com

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