

Smart homeowners know how to save on water consumption

Excessive hot water consumption is one of the easiest ways to literally pour your money down the drain. There are, however, many things you can do to help reduce water and energy waste in your home.

John Olivera, The Home Depot's energy expert, has put together a list of simple dos and don'ts to ensure the cost of your energy bill doesn't get you into hot water.

DO

• Reduce your need for hot water and energy by using a

low-flow showerhead when taking a shower. Water-saver showerheads can cut hot water use significantly.

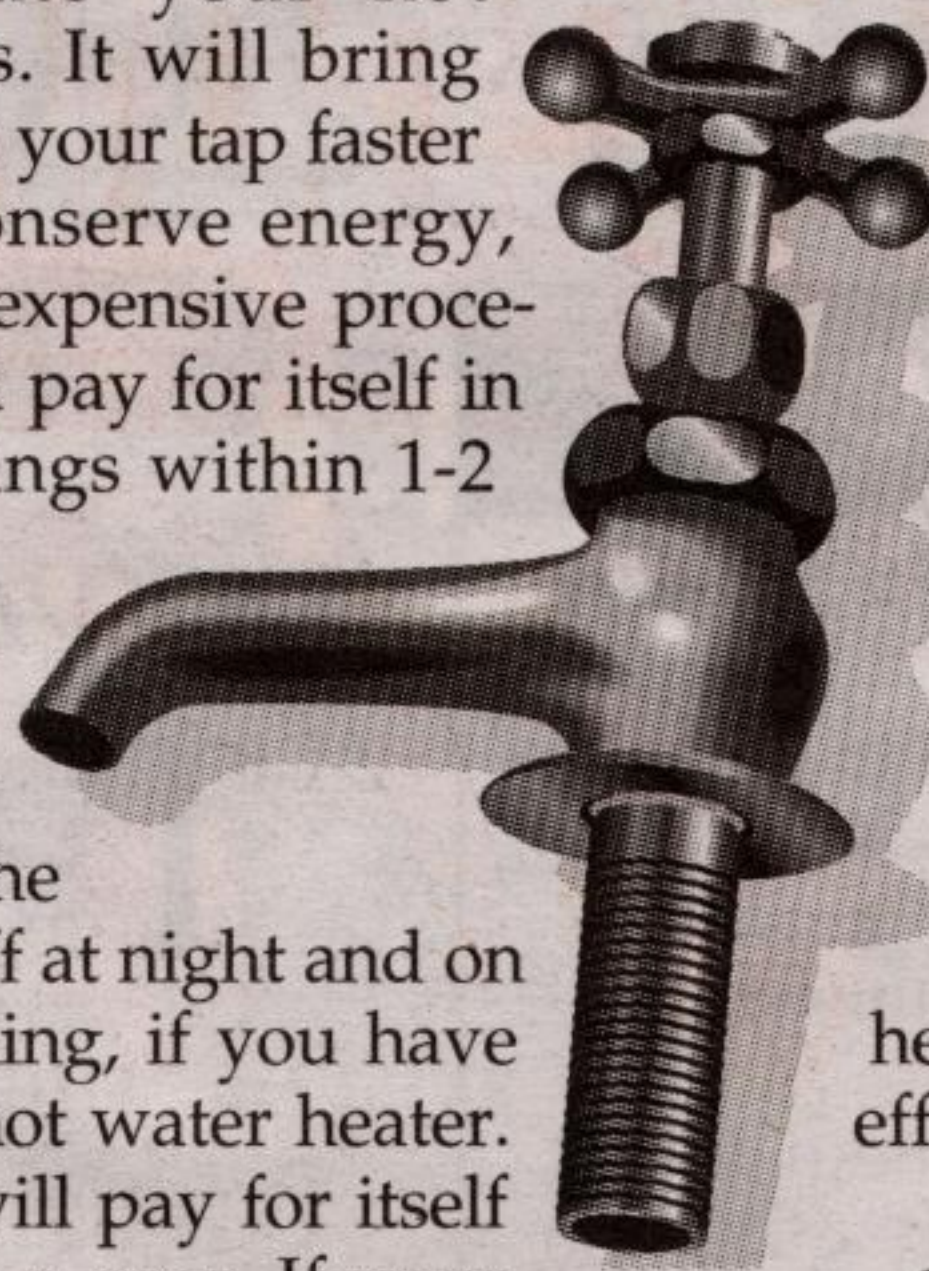
• Reduce your hot water consumption by up to one half by installing both low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators.

• Take more showers than baths. A 5-minute shower uses less than 10 gallons of hot water, compared to 15-25 gallons for a bath.

• Add a water heater insulation blanket. You can save around 4% to 9% on your water heater bill.

• Insulate your hot water pipes. It will bring hot water to your tap faster and will conserve energy, too. This inexpensive procedure should pay for itself in 1-2 years.

• Install an automatic timer that turns the hot water off at night and on in the morning, if you have an electric hot water heater. The timer will pay for itself in less than a year. If your



utility offers lower off-peak rates, consider timing the heating process at night only.

• Follow the manufacturer's advice and drain a quart of water from your water tank every three months.

This will remove sediment that impedes heat transfer and lowers the efficiency of your heater.

DON'T

• Ignore a leaky faucet or

showerhead. It will waste gallons of water in a short period, so have it repaired promptly.

• Adjust the temperature setting on your hot water heater to more than 140F. For each 10F degrees of setback you can save 3% to 5% on annual water heating costs. If you don't own a dishwasher, or you have one with its own booster heater, you should be able to lower your hot water supply to 120F.

• Leave hot water running when hand washing dishes.

—News Canada

Do-it-yourself safety tips

Home improvement can sometimes prove to be a risky proposition. Accidents can (and sometimes do) happen whenever you're working with power tools, electricity or bulky or toxic materials. And you may be doing all of this at once if you have more than one project going! Following a few safety tips can reduce your risk and cut your chance of injury.

Here are some practical ideas for staying safe.

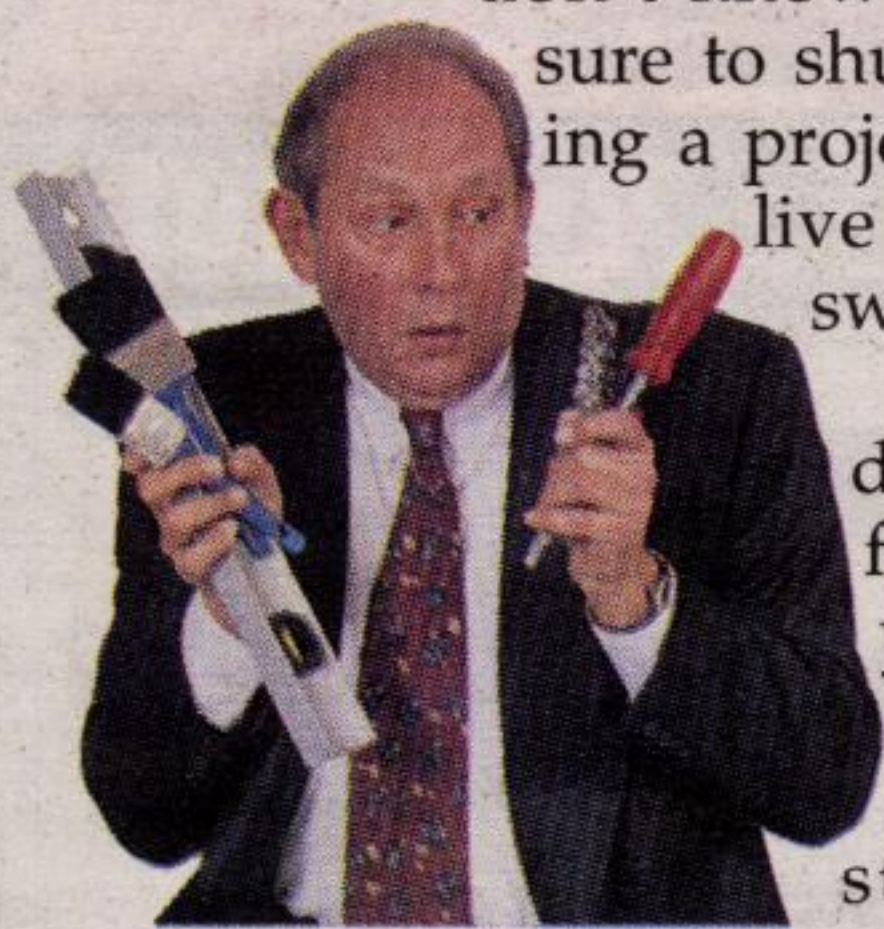
If you don't feel comfortable doing the job, don't do it! If you're uncomfortable working on the roof because of the height, hire a professional to do what needs to be done. You should also pass up any job requiring specialized tools.

Keep your work area neat. Picking up and storing tools and other sharp objects keeps them from getting underfoot. Keep power cords and extension cords untangled and be sure to remove old nails or screws from any used lumber. Keep all tools and supplies away from small children.

Be sure all power tools function properly and are equipped with safety guards. Always unplug tools before adjusting them or when you're finished with the job. Read and follow the safety guidelines in the owner's manual.

Dress for the job. Sturdy clothes, boots and work gloves are a necessity...and don't forget the safety glasses! Wear a dust mask whenever you sand wood or wallboard.

Electrical work can be a shocking experience if you don't know what you're doing! Be sure to shut off power before starting a project and never work on a live fixture, circuit, outlet or switch.



If you need to use a ladder, always place it on a flat, firm surface and keep your weight centered as you climb. Don't lean out to one side and never stand on the top two rungs.

Many products, such as varnishes, solvents and adhesives, contain hazardous chemicals or give off toxic vapors. Pay attention to all warning labels and make sure there's adequate ventilation, or use a respirator.

Test surfaces for lead-based paint before you sand or strip them. Lead test kits are available at most home improvement centers. Even a small amount of lead paint can be hazardous. Use plastic sheeting and duct tape to seal off work areas and make sure pregnant women and children stay away from the site until the dust has been removed. Use gloves, protective clothing and a respirator at all times.

Make sure your home and workshop are equipped with fire extinguishers. Be sure they're the proper size and check them regularly to make sure they're charged. Keep a first aid kit on hand to take care of any minor injuries.

Safety should always be top priority when doing any home improvement job. All it takes is a little common sense and a few minutes to put things back in their proper place to prevent accidents from happening.

—By Bob Grimson, special

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