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Four Signs of Potential Electrical Hazards in a Home

Homeowners know that the work of maintaining a home is never done. Cleaning is a daily task associated with homeownership, and such sessions can reveal more than dust buildup or dirty walls and surfaces.

When cleaning a home, homeowners can pull double duty and look for potentially hazardous situations. For example, vacuuming and dusting sessions can present a great opportunity to spot electrical hazards that might otherwise go unseen. With that in mind, homeowners can keep an eye out for these four signs of potential electrical hazards when working around the house.

1. Tingling when touching an electrical appliance: The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) advises homeowners to call a qualified electrician immediately if they experience a tingling feeling when touching an electrical appliance. The Electrical Safety Office notes experiencing a tingle or the feeling of being shocked is not normal. Homeowners who experience such a feeling should avoid the location and warn others in the home to do the same.

2. Wall outlets that look or feel unusual: Wall outlets do not garner much attention, as many are low enough to be out of sight or even behind furniture. So, a cleaning session might be the only time homeowners will notice



issues with wall outlets. The NFPA notes discolored outlets or outlets that feel warm to the touch is a sign of an electrical problem. Various issues can cause outlets to look or feel unusual. An outlet could be short-circuiting or wires could be damaged, and each issue merits the attention of a qualified electrician.

3. Foul odors: An odor that calls to mind burning rubber is another indicator of an electrical problem. Various electrical experts indicate such odors can be indicative of damaged wiring, an overloaded circuit or loose connections, each of which poses a significant safety haz-

ard. The NFPA urges homeowners to contact a qualified electrician immediately if they sense a smell of burning rubber in their homes.

4. Flickering lights: Homeowners won't need to wait until cleaning sessions to notice flickering lights. Such flickering is hard to miss regardless of what residents are doing inside a home. Sometimes lights flicker because of a loose bulb, so homeowners who notice flickering should first turn off the light, let the bulb cool down if need be and then check to make sure it isn't loose. If the bulb isn't loose, then lights could be flickering for a multitude of reasons. A loose connection can cause flickering, as can an overloaded circuit. Homeowners also may not realize that not all bulbs and dimmer switches are designed to work together. For example, modern LED light bulbs often require the installation of specific dimmer switches or the lights won't operate properly. Flickering can result if these products are not compatible. If a home is old, then flickering lights could be due to old wiring that needs to be replaced.

Daily and weekly cleaning sessions can be a good time for homeowners to perform a quick audit of electrical outlets and lights to ensure everything is safe and working properly.



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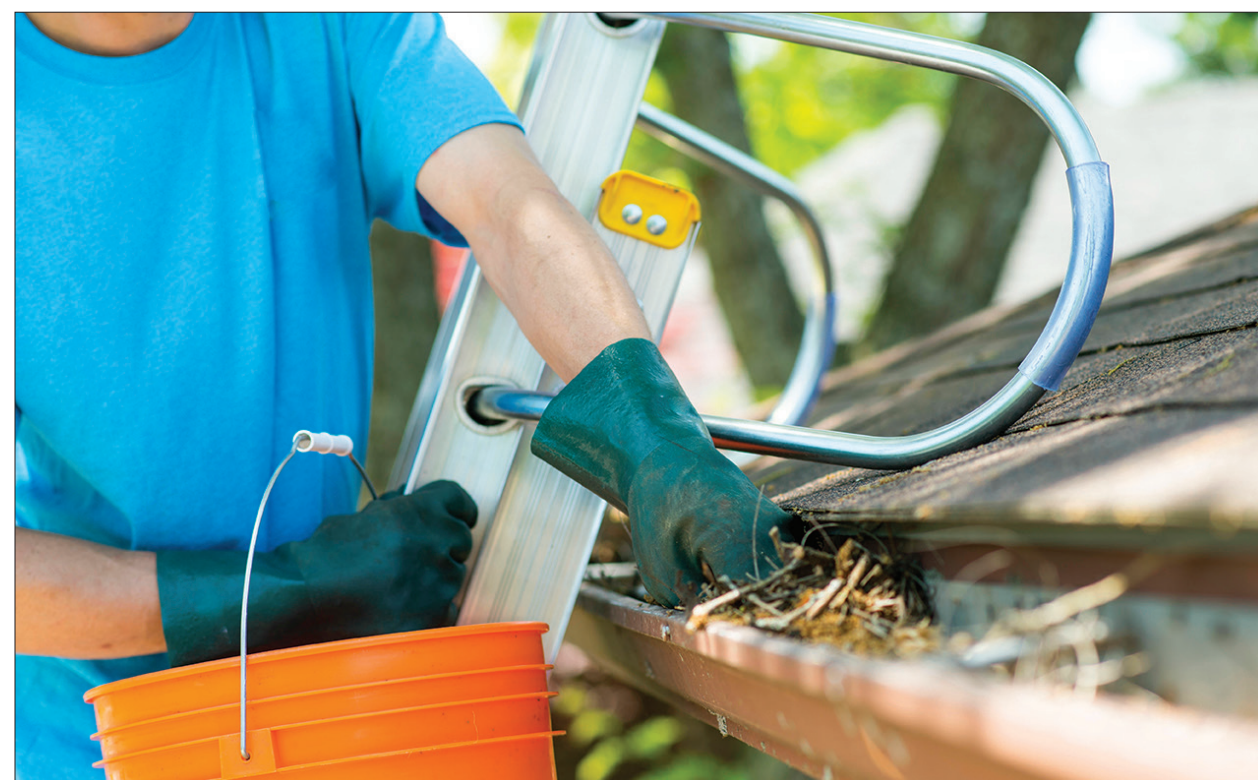
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The Benefits of a Professional Gutter Cleaning



Here are some of the reasons to leave gutter cleaning to an expert.

create habitats for pests to live, notably for mosquitoes, termites, rodents, and birds.

Homeowners can clean their own gutters, but the job is often best left to professionals. Here are some of the reasons to leave gutter cleaning to an expert.

Pros have the equipment. As with any project, having the right equipment means it will be done correctly. Handyman services and professional gutter cleaners already have the gear to reach gutters and tackle the mess, unlike some homeowners who will have to purchase tools.

Pros are trained in safety. Gutter cleaning professionals are trained in proper safety procedures and have the right equipment to safely scale homes. Gutter cleaning involves climbing ladders, walking on roofs, and handling slippery debris. It also may require working close to electrical and cable wires entering the home. Homeowners who don't know how to navigate these conditions safely risk falls or other injuries.

Pros can spot other damage. Professionals may spot damage to a home that homeowners do not see. This may include cracked seams, loose fasteners, sagging sections, and even roof damage. This allows homeowners to get a jump on the problem early on before it progresses to something more serious.

Pros save homeowners time. One of the obvious perks to letting a professional clean the gutters is, that it saves homeowners time. The expert can get the job done in less time and more efficiently than a novice weekend warrior.

Mr. Handyman, a home improvement service, says the general recommendation is to get the gutters cleaned at least twice a year: once in the spring after trees have dropped their seeds, and again in the fall after all leaves have fallen. People with heavier amounts of natural debris may need more frequent cleanings. A professional gutter service will typically include inspection of the entire gutter system; removal of all debris from gutters and downspouts; flushing of gutters and downspouts to ensure water flows correctly; assessment of water being directed away; and identification of areas in need of repair.

Gutter cleaning is an important step that safeguards a home by keeping gutters and downspouts in working order.

Gutters serve an important role on a building, catching rainwater from the roof and channelling it away from the structure. Without properly functioning gutters and downspouts, basements can flood, foundations may become cracked and soil can erode. Gutters also help maintain roof and siding longevity, ensuring that rainwater will not pool under shingles or siding. Wet leaves also

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Remedies for Creaky Floors

Hardwood floors are coveted features in many homes. The National Wood Flooring Association says wood floors are the most environmentally friendly flooring options available. In the United States, the hardwood forests that provide flooring products are growing twice as fast as they are being harvested. Furthermore, wood floors can last for many generations and require fewer raw materials to produce than other flooring options. That means less waste may end up in landfills.

Hardwood floors can endure for decades in a home, but over time those same floors may need some tender loving care to keep them looking good and working as they should. Squeaky floors are a common nuisance that homeowners may experience. Squeaking is often caused by movement and friction between floorboards. Treating the problem involves identifying the underlying issue.

Loose hardware

Squeaky floors may be due to the loosening of the hardware holding the floor in place, says The Home Depot. When nails or screws no longer are secured tightly, the boards can rub together. The noise heard is the sound produced by rubbing. Tightening or replacing the hardware can help reduce the squeaking.

Counter-snap kit method

This Old House says this kit method is a great way to fix squeaks without damaging the floor. Once the source of the squeak is located, drill a 3/32-inch pilot hole through the hardwood flooring. Then insert a screw through the kit's depth-control fixture and into the pilot hole, and drive it until it automatically snaps off below the wood surface. Follow this

up by filling the hole with wood putty that matches the floor color. Once the putty is dry, lightly sand the area to blend.

Use a shim or shims

Sometimes the floor may squeak because of a gap between the joists and the subfloor. Filling the gap with a small piece of wood called a shim can help alleviate the gap or gaps.

Drive up screws

If a squeak is just in one spot, The Home Depot says that you may be able to drive short screws from below into the subfloor.

Small gaps

For small gaps between boards, sprinkle talcum powder or powdered graphite between squeaky boards to reduce friction. Wood filler applied with a putty knife also may work. For larger gaps, use a liquid filler designed for wood floors.

Homeowners also can visit their local home improvement center for other hardware solutions designed for underfloor repairs to remedy squeaks. Many work from underneath the floor and involve mounting plates or brackets to sure up the floor.

Squeaky floors can be problematic, but noises can be banished with some repair work.

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Why an Insulated Attic is a Good Attic

As homeowners address energy efficiency around their homes, they may want to put attics at the top of their list. Because heat naturally rises during the winter and also infiltrates the roof during the summer, a roof with insufficient insulation can be energy inefficient. Many experts attest that upgrading attic insulation is a practical and cost-effective home improvement.

A desire to reduce energy bills is a primary motivator when installing attic insulation. Data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "ENERGY STAR" program says homeowners can save an average of 15 percent on heating and cooling costs, or roughly 11 percent on their total energy bills, by air sealing and insulating attics and crawl spaces. Standalone attic insulation projects frequently achieve high rates of return.

Beyond financial matters, attic insulation also creates a more comfortable and stable indoor climate. Attic insulation will buffer the interior from extreme temperature swings. This can help preserve the integrity of the home. In cold climates, attic insulation will limit the occurrence of ice dams, which form at the eaves when heat inside living spaces



escapes to the roof. Ice dams can cause water to back up under shingles and even tear away gutters.

The U.S. Department of Energy indicates residential and commercial buildings combined account for 40 percent of the nation's total energy consumption. By utilizing attic insulation and creating a proper thermal barrier, homes can draw less power from regional grids and burn less fuel locally.

Attic insulation may not be as glamorous as a room remodel, but it is an important component of a safe, comfortable and energy-efficient home.

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Signs Suggesting Doors and Windows Need Air Sealing

When pondering projects around a house, it's easy to overlook small tasks and direct your focus toward more significant undertakings. Small projects might not generate the reactions that larger projects do, but even the simplest tasks can go a long way toward making a home more comfortable.

Sealing leaks around windows and doors is unlikely to make any homeowner's list of dream projects. However, as the moderate temperatures of fall give way to harsh winter weather, homeowners who seal leaks around their doors and windows may be surprised by how effective this simple project can be at reducing energy costs and making a home more comfortable. In

fact, the U.S. Department of Energy notes that sealing inefficient windows and doors can reduce annual utility bills by 7 to 15 percent. That's a potentially significant cost savings, particularly in an era marked by rising utility costs.

Before homeowners seal their windows and doors, they can first look for signs that these areas are allowing outdoor air in. The United States Environmental Protection Agency notes there are some obvious signs that a home has leaks around the windows and doors. Those signs include:

Drafts: If you place your hand around closed windows or doors but can still feel drafts, then there are leaks that will need to be sealed.

Gaps: Gaps around windows and doors that are letting outdoor air in typically are noticeable to the naked eye. You might see light coming in through small cracks on a sunny day. These gaps may only be in one or two places, but that's enough to adversely affect energy bills.

Unwelcome guests: Pests or insects may be another indicator that there are gaps around windows or doors. If you consistently see insects near a particular entryway or window, or signs of pests near doorways, that's likely because there's a gap or hole in these areas that's enabling them to access the interior of your home.

Odors: It's not only your sense of vision that might detect leaks, but also your sense of smell. If you notice exterior odors inside your home even though doors and windows are closed, then leaks around these areas may be the culprit.

Peeling paint or wallpaper: Peeling paint or wallpaper is another potential indicator of a leak around a door or window. This can



occur when water is entering the home through the leak. Over time, wet paint or wallpaper dries and can begin to peel. This is a potentially significant issue because it can lead to mold infestation and even structural damage to a home.

The EPA characterizes sealing behind windows and doors as a moderate to difficult project. If leaks are detected, homeowners can benefit from hiring a professional to do the job quickly and correctly.

Leaks around windows and doors can prove costly if they're not addressed promptly. As winter approaches, investigating for leaks and addressing any that are found can save money and ensure a home stays comfortable when the temperatures drop.



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A Rundown on Kitchen Cabinet Projects

Updated kitchens are in demand, and homeowners are not hesitating to open their wallets when renovating these popular spaces in their homes. According to a 2025 study from Houzz, the median spend on kitchen renovations rose to \$60,000 between 2024 and 2025.

Homeowners concerned about the high price tag of kitchen renovations should know they have some less expensive means to giving their kitchens a new look. Cabinet projects can dramatically alter how a kitchen looks and feels. This rundown of cabinet projects can help homeowners answer any questions they have about this unique and budget-friendly way to revitalize their kitchens.

Refacing and replacing each merit consideration. Homeowners unfamiliar with cabinet projects may not realize they have two very different options to consider. Refacing allows homeowners to transform the look and feel of a kitchen while keeping the existing cabinet structure in place. When refacing cabinets, new doors, drawer fronts and typically hardware are installed to replace the existing ones. When replacing cabinets, the existing cabinet structure is torn out and completely new units are installed. Replacing might be done when the structural integrity of the existing cabinets is questionable or when homeowners are not fond of the exist-



ing cabinet layout and decide to change it completely.

Cabinet refacing or replacing projects will not cost nearly as much as a complete kitchen overhaul. The cost of any home renovation project is unique to each home. No two homes are the same, and variables like layout and square footage will affect the price of most projects, including cabinet renovations. But homeowners should know that the average cost of cabinet refacing projects and replacement projects falls far short of the \$60,000 price tag of kitchen renovations noted by Houzz. According to Angi.com, refacing cabinets costs

between \$900 and \$6000 on average, while cabinet replacement projects can cost anywhere from \$2,000 to \$30,000. The wide ranges reflect the variables unique to each home. Homeowners are urged to contact a professional who specializes in cabinet refacing and replacement to get an accurate estimate of how much these projects will cost in their homes.

Cabinets also can be repainted. If refacing or replacing cabinets also threatens to bust the budget, homeowners can consider repainting or re-staining existing cabinets. This is a particularly cost-effective project because it gives the kitchen a new look but does not require homeowners to purchase new doors, drawers or hardware. This is a potentially good option for homeowners whose existing cabinets are structurally sound and painted but started to fade in regard to their color. It's also a potentially sound temporary option for homeowners who are hoping to do a full kitchen renovation at some point in the near future but looking for a less costly and temporary means to give their kitchens a fresh look.

Cabinet projects can create a different feel in the kitchen without requiring homeowners to make as sizeable a financial investment as a full kitchen overhaul demands.

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Tips to Winterize a Home as Cold Weather Approaches

It's not uncommon to spend a lot of time out of the house when the weather outside is warm. The popularity of outdoor living spaces has made it easier than ever to enjoy nature without leaving home, which can generally be done from late spring to mid-fall each year in many regions. But as fall creeps toward winter and temperatures drop, it's time to head back indoors.

As millions prepare to go back inside with winter approaching, it can be beneficial to winterize a home so interior spaces are more comfortable and exterior spaces are better able to withstand potentially harsh winter weather.

Check your carbon monoxide detectors. Fall is a great season to open the windows in many regions that feature prototypical autumn air. But the crisp air of fall will eventually give way to much colder air, at which time the windows will be closed and likely remain shut for months to come. The Minnesota Department of Health notes that carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that cannot be detected by the senses. When windows remain closed for long periods of time, such as in winter, the buildup of CO, which can come from sources like water heaters, gas stoves, fireplaces, and clothes dryers, can poison residents over time. CO de-

tectors are a safety net against such a fate, but they must be operating at peak capacity in order to be effective. As fall winds down, check all CO detectors to make sure they're working properly and replace any that are not.

Check for drafts. Check around windows and doors throughout the home to see if there are any gaps that are allowing air from outside to enter the home. If daytime temperatures are mild well into the fall, then it can be difficult to see if there are any drafts before the sun goes down. Conduct this check in the evenings when temperatures are a little more chilly and leaks are easier to detect. If drafts are detected, apply weather stripping around doors and windows that do not require replacement. If there's drafts around aging windows and doors, consider replacing them.

Call a chimney sweeping service. Cozying up beside a fire can make anyone forget the cold weather outside. But fireplaces should be subjected to a thorough cleaning by a skilled professional before each winter. Animals might have nested in the chimney since the fireplace was last used, and you will want any nests cleared prior to lighting your first fire of the season. In addition, the tar-like substance creosote, which forms when wood is burned in a fireplace, can build up and

harden over time. That's a dangerous prospect, as creosote is highly flammable, which can lead to chimney fires. Creosote also can block the flow of air through a chimney, and that can trap gasses, including CO, in a home.

Reverse your fans. It's a simple step but one people may not even realize they can make. In homes with ceiling fans, residents can reverse the fans so the blades spin clockwise. This simple step pushes trapped warm air hovering around the ceiling into the living space below. This can make home interiors warmer without requiring residents to turn up the thermostat and increase their energy bill.

Replace your HVAC air filter. Replacing the air filter on your HVAC prior to winter can make the unit operate more efficiently, which can help reduce your winter-time energy bill. Replacing the filter prior to winter also improves indoor air quality, which is a notable benefit during a time of year when the windows typically remain closed for months.

Winterizing a home is not a significant undertaking, but it can be very effective at making homes healthier and more comfortable once windows are closed for the season.

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