

Energy-Saving Professional Pointers

By Warren Camp

Because, as President Bush declared in May, "The current energy crisis is as bad as that of 1971," energy conservation is a must this summer. Here's a collection of new and time-honored energy-saving tips from Bay Area home-remodeling, building, repair, and maintenance professionals as the hottest part of the summer approaches.

Kitchens

Lighting If you already have fluorescent lighting in the kitchen, great. It uses less energy than incandescent lamps. But check the plastic fluorescent fixture light covers. If they have a darkish tint, replace them with white or translucent cover lenses to let through as much light as possible.

Kitchen Exhaust Fans/Vents When using the conventional gas or electric oven, use the overhead exhaust fan/vent if you have one. Keep it clean and open a nearby window to maximize efficiency.

Dishwashers Always wash full loads and use the short cycles for everything but the dirtiest of dishes. Forgo using the heated dry cycle. It wastes energy and can actually contribute to spotty dishes. Use air-dry instead. And since the dishwasher uses 80 percent of its energy to heat water, you're better off washing dishes by hand.

Ovens Check the seal around conventional oven doors. If it's worn, heat could be escaping and heating up the room, forcing the air conditioner to work harder.

Microwaves On really hot days, use your microwave to prepare meals. A microwave oven uses 50 percent less energy than a conventional oven and it won't make the kitchen any hotter.

Unplug the microwave after each use to save energy, unless you must have its clock functional.

Refrigerators To keep the fridge running smoothly and efficiently:

- Check the rubber seals around the doors of the refrigerator and freezer compartments. Worn or frayed seals allow cold air to escape and make the appliance's motor run more frequently. Replace seals when needed.
- Clean the condenser coils every three months. Dusty coils make the motor run more frequently and work as much as 30 percent harder. For your safety and easier access, pull the fridge from the wall and unplug it before vacuuming the coils.
- An empty fridge freezer wastes energy. A full refrigerator's motor runs less because the cold items inside help keep items cool. Tip: If your fridge isn't full, fill it with containers of

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Exempt Home Offices

After intense criticism from the business community, OSHA has agreed that employers will not be held liable for federal health and safety violations that occur in the home offices of the estimated 20 million employees who "telecommute" each day.

"We believe the OSH [Occupational Health and Safety] Act does not apply to an employee's house or furnishings. OSHA will not hold employers liable for work activities in employees' home offices," said Charles N. Jeffress, assistant secretary of labor in charge of OSHA, in prepared testimony.

"OSHA does not and will not inspect home offices," Jeffress said. "The bottom line is, as it has always been, that OSHA will respect the privacy of the home and expects that employers will as well."

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The refrigerator is the second-biggest energy user in your home. Keeping your food and drinks cold 24 hours a day accounts for 20 to 25 percent of your monthly electric bill.

A fridge that consumes a thrifty 500 kilowatt-hours of electricity each year will cost a whopping 40 percent less to operate over the course of a year than an inefficient model that uses 830 kilowatt-hours.

bottled water.

- Set the refrigerator's temperature between 35° and 38° and the freezer at 0°. Finally, don't just stand there with the door open while grazing. Get what you want, then close the door to keep precious cool air in.

Bathrooms

Light Bulbs If you have vanity lights in the bathroom, replace incandescent lamps with compact fluorescents that are much cooler than incandescent bulbs — they cost more but last much longer. You can get a 20-watt fluorescent lamp that emits the same amount of light as a 75-watt incandescent lamp.

Exhaust Fans If your bathroom doesn't have easily openable windows and uses an exhaust fan, clean its grate and blades to remove dust and sludge.

Air-Leak Separations Check for air leaks around windows, at ceilings above tubs and showers, around baseboard moldings, and behind electrical receptacle and switch cover plates. Caulk wall and baseboard separations and insert foam gaskets behind cover plates.

Hair Dryer Put away the hair dryer and let your hair air-dry naturally. You'll save money and it's better for your hair.

Shower Heads Use low-flow shower heads. Sure, we're talking about energy shortages, not water. But low-flow shower fixtures also mean you will use less hot water from the water heater.

Faucets Fix dripping faucets. One leaky hot water faucet can waste gallons of water a month. That not only increases water bills, but also increases the gas or electric bill for heating the water.

Garages and Utility Rooms

Water Heater The water heater is another big energy gobbler — a quarter of every energy bill goes toward heating water for cooking, bathing, laundry, and so on.

Newer models made within the last 15 years are preinsulated and more efficient than older ones. However, it's a good idea to insulate new ones as well to surpass the minimum insulation standard. Do check to be sure that a retrofit blanket doesn't void the heater warranty.

If you have an older model and can't

afford to replace it, follow these tips:

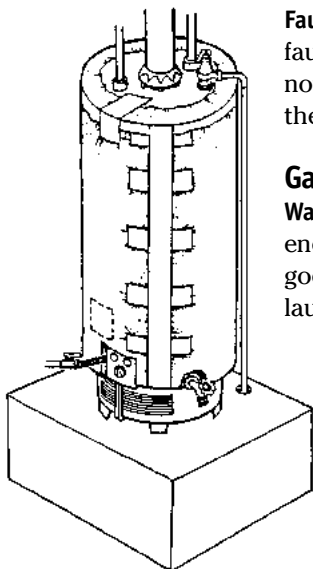
- Turn the water heater's thermostat down to 120°. It costs money to keep 30–50 gallons of water piping hot 24 hours a day.
- Have a water pump and timer installed on the hot water piping and set the timer so hot water is available at only preset times and intervals.
- If you're going on vacation for several days, turn the temperature down even lower. See if your model has a "vacation setting."
- If it's not already insulated, cover it with a thermal blanket (not a regular blanket from the closet — that's a fire hazard). They cost less than \$10 at most hardware supply stores. This helps, especially in the winter, if the heater is in the garage or other unheated area.

Washers and Dryers Regardless of where the appliances are, follow these tips:

- Run the washing machine and dryer (as well as the dishwasher) in the evening when electricity rates may be lower and heat from those appliances won't increase demands on central air conditioning.
- Unless you're sanitizing bedding or other articles, wash laundry in cold water.
- Wash only full loads of laundry.
- Use the least amount of laundry powder possible. An overabundance of suds makes your washing machine work harder and it's more difficult to fully rinse the garments.
- Check the rubber seal around the dryer door. Replace worn or crimped seals, which allow hot air inside to escape.
- Instead of drying clothes with the dryer, let them air-dry. Weather permitting, try hanging clothes on an outdoor clothesline to dry, or use a retractable clothesline in the garage. If you need to dry thick fabrics such as denim, run them in the drying cycle for a short while and then air-dry them.

Weather Stripping If your garage is attached to your home, be sure and check the weather stripping around the door leading to the house. Then check all exterior doors. If it's worn, crimped, or not making the proper contact with the door, replace it. Because garages and utility rooms with concrete floors radiate heat and can get hot as well as cold through the seasons, you'll want to keep that heat and cold out of the rest of the house.

Lighting Do you use fluorescent lights in the garage, laundry, or utility room? If more than two or three light fixtures in the room are controlled by a single switch, consider having an electrician



rewire them by adding one or more switches. That way, you turn on only the light source you need and don't waste electricity by lighting up the entire room.

Living Areas

Windows and Shades Keep windows, especially those on south- and west-facing walls, closed during the hottest part of the day. If you're not running the air conditioner, open the windows in late evening to let cool air in. Close draperies, blinds, and window/door shades if the room gets a lot of sun.

Ceiling Paddle Fans Install one in each room you spend a lot of time in. Multispeed, two-directional fans can dramatically make you feel cooler when the room temperature is high.

Look for newer fan blade designs in the next year or two that will improve the air flow by reducing the drag on the blade, thereby costing less to operate.

In winter months, switch the fan to the upward direction. This effectively helps circulate warm air throughout the room instead of keeping it up near the ceiling level.

Computer Centers Program the computer and monitor to the standby or power- or energy-saving mode when not in use. Set monitors to sleep after 15 minutes of inactivity and computer hard drives after 30 minutes.

Turn off peripherals (such as external modems, printers, disc drives, laptop battery chargers, and speakers) when not in use.

Closets Believe it or not, say energy auditors, it pays — or rather, saves — to keep closet and unheated dressing room doors closed. Otherwise, you waste precious air-conditioning and heating costs on garments you're not wearing.

If you have central air, select which doors to keep open or closed to maintain the desired temperatures.

Roof and Attics

Homeowners might not think about the attic when making energy-saving efforts, but they should. This area is an extremely important part of the house when it comes to conservation.

Attic Ventilation An insulated and properly ventilated attic can help reduce cooling and heating bills by 30 percent. Because hot air rises, a ventilation system — whether it consists of a wind turbine, screened/louver vents, or a whole-house fan — lets hot air escape from the attic. Otherwise, heat radiates back into the house,

making the indoor climate 10 to 25 degrees hotter than you'd prefer.

Duct Systems Often forgotten are the duct systems that carry air from the furnace and air conditioner to each conditioned room of the house. But duct systems can be plagued with poor insulation and leaks (imagine trying to blow air through a straw with numerous holes). Duct leaks in either system can let warm and cool air escape before reaching a room.

PG&E estimates that during the summer many homeowners lose 25 cents of every cooling dollar due to leaky ducts. If your home's duct system leaks or isn't insulated, call PG&E to see if you qualify for cost-saving vouchers for many energy efficiency measures (800-933-9555).

Attic Floor Insulation If your attic is accessible but has no thermal insulation between the floor joists, you're literally throwing money away. This should be your number one cost-saving effort. Insulation keeps cooler air in your rooms during the summer and warmer air in during the winter.

Insulation effectiveness is measured in R-values, called radiant barriers. The higher the R-value, the better. The Department of Energy recommends that in California attics, every square inch of insulation have at least an R-38 rating.

If your home's attic has an insulated floor, have an insulation contractor check its thickness and uniformity throughout the attic, even in those hard-to-reach nooks and crannies that are often missed. After a number of years, insulation settles and loses its effectiveness. Usually, if it's less than 6 or 7 inches thick, add more.

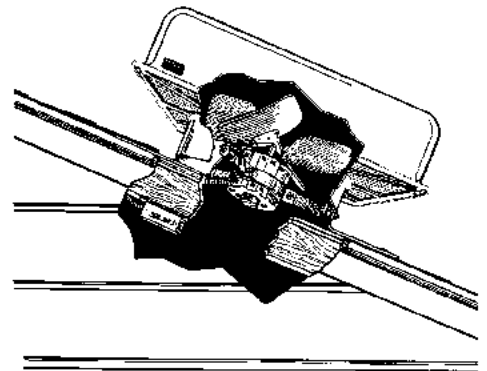
Wind Turbines To maximize your attic's insulation effort, have wind turbines installed at the highest points of the roof. Wind turbines are self-generating, so it doesn't cost much for them to draw heat out of an attic.

Attic Fans Install a whole-house fan. It literally can suck all of the hot air out of the house. It's usually placed in the attic, on wall or ceiling, and should be controlled by a thermostat so that when the temperature reaches a preset level, the fan or fans turn on and continue to cool the attic. When you come home in the evening, your rooms will be a comfortable temperature.

Throughout each habitable room, save energy by using fluorescent lights, single-light switches, programmable timers, and ceiling-mount and portable fans.

Place magnetized rubber barriers over warm-air-supply grates on walls and floors in spare bedrooms that don't get much use. Have your furnace, air conditioner, water heater, and other appliances inspected and serviced routinely. Even the best devices are effective only if they're well maintained.

If you still have a furnace with a pilot light, turn off the pilot light during the nonheating season. You'll save between 3 and 9 percent off your bill.



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Roofing Surface If possible, select a light color for your new roof membrane. Light-colored roofs help reflect sunlight and heat, thereby keeping a home cooler.

Yards, Patios, Decks, and Exterior

Shade Trees Well-placed shade trees can trim 25 percent off your cooling bill by shading the house from direct sunlight. Planting appropriate hedges and tall plantings in front of windows, especially on south- and west-facing walls, keeps rooms cooler.

Windows and Doors Cover sun-exposed decks, windows, and doors with retractable awnings. Apply light-filtering film to interior faces of glass panes.

Replace single-pane windows with double-pane — they have a much higher R-value. Beware: Don't be deluded by double-pane windows with aluminum frames — they have a lower R-value than single-pane wood-frame units. If you're replacing windows, be sure they carry a National Fenestration Rating Council label. And check with your utility to see if they offer rebates on window replacement.

Weather-strip windows and doors if you feel a draft or see separations.

Barbecue Don't like the taste or texture of microwaved food? Then fire up the grill (unless it's an electric one, of course) and keep the cooking heat outside your house.

Candle Power Entertaining outdoors? Use torches or luminarias around the deck or patio. Use candles on deck tables. You'll save money by not using electric lights — and candlelight is an excellent substitute.

Alternative Lighting If outdoor lights are the decorative accent type, perhaps highlighting a blooming topiary or a molded cherub, keep them off.

Keep dawn-to-dusk security lights on as needed; however, set them to light for the shortest period you can tolerate.

Set the timers of motion-activated security lights so that lights don't remain lit for hours after initially detecting motion.

Walkway and landscape lighting should be the low-voltage type, controlled by a dimmer switch — you'll quickly find that dimming any of your lights can conserve energy noticeably.

If you want to save the most with walkway lighting, use solar-powered photovoltaic cell ones that convert sunlight into electricity.

The Choice Is Yours

To find other ways to cut electricity use, ask your electric company whether it offers free energy audits. Private firms also perform much the same service for a fee.

You can locate a certified energy-audit consultant by logging on to the nonprofit Residential Energy Services Network at www.natresnet.org.

Expect to pay \$200 to \$300 for a comprehensive home survey. But it can pay for itself many times over if you put to use the sound advice about what's watt. **A-P B**

Save Energy at Work No Sweat!

Save money on energy bills by using less energy, especially during peak hours, with these power-saving ideas.

Office Equipment

- Turn off computers, copiers, monitors, printers, scanners, and lights after hours. If you can't turn computers off, at least set the computers and monitors to use "sleep mode."

Cooling

- Set thermostats at 78° in summer, 68° in winter.
- Install blinds, awnings, or reflective window film to keep offices cool, especially on south-facing windows.
- Close shades or blinds during early morning and late evening.
- Routinely maintain air-conditioning units. It'll save you money by preventing problems or catchings them early.
- Turn off unnecessary lights.

Refrigeration

- Keep evaporator coils clean and ice-free.
- Adjust door latches and replace worn door gaskets.
- Install automatic door-closers at walk-in entries.
- Use night covers on display cases.

Food Service

- Use cooking equipment to capacity for more energy efficiency.
- Turn ovens down or off during low production periods.
- Make sure oven doors fit tightly and gaskets are in good condition.

Perhaps most important is the need to develop a plan enabling you to conduct business during power blackouts.

Working Home These Days?

IRS Puts You to the Test

THE IDEA OF RUNNING A BUSINESS FROM HOME HAS always had a certain appeal. Today there's some good news, especially when it comes to taxes: If you operate your business from home and qualify under IRS rules, you may be able to claim a home-office deduction.

Deductions are the name of the game here, and the big question is: Do you qualify to write off home-office-related expenses? To give you the "yes" answer you want, the IRS generally requires that you use your home office "exclusively" and "regularly" for business — meaning you can't transform your office into a family room after business hours. Moreover, the office still has to meet one of three criteria: You're fine if the structure that's used for your business isn't attached to your residence, if you use the office to meet with clients, or if the office is your "principal place of business."

Testing the Waters

For taxpayers to qualify for this deduction when the office is attached to or inside the residence, the IRS requires that three legal tests be met.

Test #1 Your home must be the principal place where you conduct your business. If you conduct your business in more than one place, you must evaluate (1) the relative importance of the activities at each location and (2) the amount of time spent at each location.

Test #2 The business must occupy a separate and identifiable space. To qualify for a deduction, your office must be apart from the rest of your home. The easiest home office to prove to the IRS is one in a separate structure, like a converted stand-alone garage. But many folks convert a spare bedroom to a legitimate home office, which is fine if you really do use the space for business.

Test #3 You must use your business space regularly and exclusively for business purposes. It isn't enough to use it just occasionally. If you regularly meet customers or clients at your home office, it's a good idea to keep a record of appointments.

You can't use your business space for anything but business. So don't claim as office the kitchen table or the room where you watch TV with the kids.

IRS Sets Good Examples

Here are some examples that the IRS says illustrate how it applies this rule.

Example 1: A schoolteacher spends 25 hours per week at school, but 30 hours at home grading papers and preparing for class. The IRS denies a home-office deduction because the essence of his business is teaching students at another location.

Example 2: A plumber works out of her home office and keeps a full-time employee there. The plumber is at her home office 10 hours a week and in the field 40 hours. The IRS says that she is not entitled to a deduction for rent or depreciation because the home office is not the principal place she conducts business. (She can deduct the employee's salary.)

Example 3: A home-based jewelry businessperson sells goods by mail. She spends 25 hours a week at home and 15 hours working outside the office. The home-office deduction is allowed.

IRS Rules

Recent law changes make it easier to take deductions for a home business. Even so, getting started isn't as simple as plugging in a computer and getting down to business.

A deduction is allowed if you use your home office to conduct administrative or management activities for your business if there is no other fixed location where you do so. For example, you can take a deduction if you use your home office for scheduling appointments, ordering supplies, doing research, or keeping your books. In all other respects, the rules remain the same — you must use your home office exclusively for business.

Such changes will make the deduction available to small-business owners who perform their most significant business functions outside their home, but use their home office to manage their business, and have no other fixed location where similar managerial or administrative work is performed — for example, doctors who work primarily in hospitals, salespeople who sell in customers' offices, and building contractors who work at job sites.



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Working at Home

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Calculating Your Deduction

Your next step is to figure out how much you can deduct. First, divide the number of square feet used for your home business by your home's total square footage. This percentage determines how much you can deduct.

If You Rent If you rent, figuring out your deduction is pretty simple. Just multiply your annual rent payment by the percentage of the space occupied by the office.

Example: Lois, who makes ceramic frogs at home, rents a 900-square-foot apartment for \$8,000 per year. One 200-square-foot room (22 percent of the total) contains a kiln and work tables. Lois can deduct 22 percent of her rent, \$1,778, as a home-office expense.

If You Own If you own your home, you can take a deduction for "depreciation" — that is, a deduction that reflects the wearing-out of your office space. The tax code declares that a building wears out over a certain number of years. For buildings bought before 1994, this period is 27.5

years; for buildings bought since then, it is 39 years. Over that length of time, you can deduct the cost of the space you use for business.

If you bought the property after 1987, you must deduct the same amount each year ("straight line" depreciation). For property bought earlier, you can take larger deductions in the first few years ("accelerated" depreciation).

You must also determine the values of the building and the land it rests on, because you cannot deduct any part attributable to the land. In the eyes of the tax law, land never depreciates. An allocation of 80 percent to structure and 20 percent to land is common.

Example: Katie uses 400 of her home's 1,800 square feet (22 percent) for her business. Katie bought her home for \$100,000 in 1987 and hasn't taken any depreciation deductions. The local property-tax assessor says the lot is worth \$20,000 and the structure \$80,000. Katie calculates her depreciation deduction this way:

- $\$80,000 / 27.5 \text{ years} = \$2,909 \text{ per year}$
- $22 \text{ percent business usage} \times \$2,909 = \$646 \text{ per year deduction for the office}$

Remember two things: You've got to pass IRS's three legal tests. And deductions are the name of the game. **A-P B**

Fast "Real Estate" Facts

Weekend Homes Are the Rage According to the National Association of Realtors, 377,000 single-family second homes were sold in 1999 — a 9.3 percent jump from 1997. And real estate agents say it's not just fifty-something boomers buying retirement retreats in the country or at the beach — people in their 30s and 40s are buying weekend property.

Bare Households We learn from *Smart Money* (March 2001) that the number of U.S. households that lack homeowner's insurance has climbed from 1.5 percent in 1983 to 5 percent in 2000.

Average Lifespans The average lifespan of a home in Japan is 23 years, while it's 45 years in the United States and 75 years in the United Kingdom.

On the Move The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 16 percent of the population moves every year.

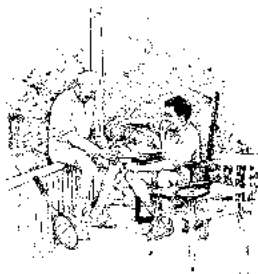
Spreading Out *Kiplinger's* reports that homebuilders say they'll need to put up 18 million homes between now and 2009 just to keep up with the increasing number of families. That's nearly 10 percent more than were built in the '90s.

Homes Can Be Too Expensive A Californian earning the median income is still \$30,000 below the base salary required to qualify for a median-priced home in the state.

San Jose, California, Housing Woes The National Association of Home Builders' most recent quarterly report found that in San Jose, a software engineer earning \$90,000 cannot qualify for homeownership, but does qualify for housing subsidies.

Realtors Be Gone According to *Smart Money* (June 2001), now is a good time to forget real-estate agents because more people than ever are selling their home themselves — about 20 percent nationwide, up from 16 percent a year ago. A weakening economy will encourage more and more consumers to sell on their own and save the commission.

Did You Say Billions to Maintain a Home? The U.S. Census Bureau estimates year-2000 expenditures for improvements and repairs of residential properties at \$149 billion: Maintenance and repairs account for \$42.5 billion; improvements amount to \$106.5 billion. **A-P B**



Business Is Booming for Remodelers

While Customer Service Fails Miserably

By Warren Camp

MY PHONE CALLS TO REMODELING CONTRACTORS, subcontractors, designers, and suppliers over the past few years during this booming economy usually brought the standard reply, "Gee, Warren, business is booming and we couldn't be busier." Unfortunately, in most cases it took one to three weeks for my telephone calls or faxes to be returned by these busy bees.

When I was actively contracting during the '70s and '80s, I'd fret that my company's business pace was either feast or famine. Sure, I knew that a remodeling firm couldn't survive in a famine. But heck, my ego would love a feast-like challenge. It didn't take me long to see that during an economic feast, I was up to my ears in past-due payments; late or forgotten calls, faxes, and meetings; postponed estimate appointments; shortened bid preparations; and so on.

In addition, I quickly found out that my chances of finding qualified carpenters, laborers, and office personnel to fill the demanding voids were slim to impossible. With too many jobs but not enough trained employees to handle the load, my job performance sagged as customer service virtually disappeared.

Like Picking Cherries

Being so busy then, I intentionally overbid the many estimates I had on my desk. And I raised my rates and only contracted a few large jobs that were bound to bring in large profits.

I regretfully told those consumers who called for an estimate that "We're too busy to look for new work at this time. Can you call back in about four months?"

As you'd expect, I wasn't called back in four months by any of the disappointed callers. In fact, I found that I was never called back because I had conclusively demonstrated to my potential and previous clients that I didn't care about them enough and that they shouldn't waste their time with me and my company.

I had lost numerous jobs as well as opportunities. Carelessly taking on too many remodeling jobs kept me from serving my current clients and prevented me from enjoying business relationships with new clients and tradespersons. Being lackadaisical about how I should serve customers put me under the table as the feast was enjoyed by remodelers more mindful about successfully serving customers.

When All Is Said and Done

It's not just I who complain that industry professionals are failing miserably in customer service, year after year. In 1998, according to the Council of Better Business Bureaus, the bad news was that only car dealers and auto repair shops generated more consumer complaints than home improvement contractors. But thanks to the current economic boon, complaint ratings have changed.

John Heilprin of The Associated Press, having reviewed the ninth annual survey jointly undertaken by the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators and the Consumer Federation of America, reported that "This is the first time in the life of the survey that the category of home improvement services overtook automobile sales as the No. 1 complaint category." Eighty-two percent of the 160 consumer agencies surveyed cited home improvement services as the major complaint source. That's up from 68 percent last year.

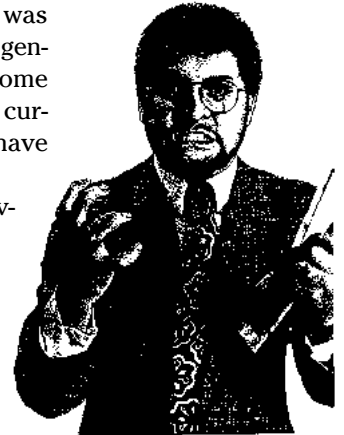
Call it sloppy or careless. The most common problem was poor workmanship, cited by 21 percent of those surveyed, followed by not completing the project on time (18 percent), not showing up for work when expected (12 percent), going over budget (6 percent), and promising more than they could deliver (5 percent).

Follow the Directions

If you were wondering why, after you called five contractors for an estimate, one called back three weeks later and the rest didn't return your call, now you know.

If only remodeling contractors, subcontractors, designers, and suppliers could sense the sour taste in consumers' mouths. Trade professionals have been too busy to realize the side effects that a robust economy can have when business owners are careless and sloppy.

As I see it, the time has come for trade professionals to find the best ways to slow down their frenetic pace, locate and retain qualified professionals, and make a concerted effort to reach out to consumers as never before. The remodeling industry had better not continue to wait for an economic slowdown, bear market, or surprise famine before it recognizes the task at hand — to believe in and resurrect customer service as a critical element for success. **A-P B**



Access Remodeling

Its Time Has Come

By Warren Camp



Russell Kennefick, CR, has been offering complete residential remodeling services since 1969. The Accessibility Contractor (650-437-0934) specializes in home accessibility modification, matching access with ability for Kennefick's clients.

LET'S FACE IT. YOUR FIRST AWARENESS OF THE AGING and disability phenomenon usually comes well before your AARP card arrives. Call it user-accessible, user-friendly, or universal design, but as the population ages and other physical challenges must be considered, it's remodeling contractors who stand to be called on to help make bathrooms, bedrooms, kitchens, and stairways easier to use.

That's how Russ Kennefick, CR, got started. Six years ago, a remodeling contractor for 25 years, Kennefick went to Las Vegas for a huge home remodeling convention. First attracted to a seminar that invited remodeling contractors to develop an alternate niche by serving the disabled, he sat in on every one of the disabled-related seminars over the three-day convention. He felt so comfortable with the idea of helping the physically challenged that he returned to San Mateo and became The Accessibility Contractor.

A Friend in Need Is a Friend Indeed

For the last six years, Kennefick has divided his remodeling and accessibility work 50-50, although he'd prefer to raise his accessibility stake to 75 percent because he enjoys developing relationships with customers who have "need lists" as opposed to those with "wish lists."

"Aging and physically challenged clients are more patient," Kennefick found out. "They're more understanding and they're on the job site with me more of the time. I can converse with them and understand exactly what they'd like."

A whole-house remodeler for 31 years, Kennefick has earned the "Certified Remodeler" designation from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (see a description of CR on page 11). He's remodeled tons of Bay Area kitchens, bathrooms, and additions. But he says that "By far, my business today is more into making people comfortable than remodeling and renovating." That's what energizes The Accessibility Contractor.

Trust Me

Right from the start, Russ Kennefick works on building a trusting relationship with his elderly or physically challenged clients. When he first meets his customers and hears their personal predicaments, he empathizes with them and

begins to appreciate their frailties and struggles, evaluating their home and lifestyle by "working with their abilities, not their disabilities."

Houses are tools for living. And they need to be the right tools for the people living in them. Today's average life-span is 74, and 80ish isn't uncommon. In 1900, the average was only 48. The big problem for many of us is that we're living in the same type of house for many years or decades. The house designs are the same — the people are different.

The majority of Kennefick's Bay Area clients are at least 60 years of age. The reality of longevity sets in when you read that the World Health Organization estimates that the majority of baby boomers will see their 100th birthday.

And the elderly have great staying power. A recent AARP survey showed that 8 to 10 percent of 55-plus seniors move to retirement communities; another 6 percent accept the nursing home inevitability; and 83 percent want to stay where they live today.

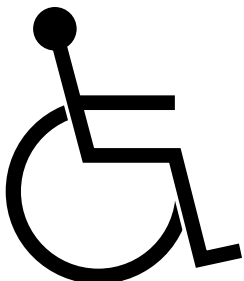
So, with more than 28 million of the U.S. population 60 or older and another 40 million with some form of physical disability, you can expect that more and more qualified remodelers will develop this new niche.

Breaking the Mold

Simply put, accessibility does not have to be boring or institutional. The focus of universal design or user accessibility, making space more accessible, is one that breaks the traditional design approach and is more flexible and adaptable. It's accessible to all people, regardless of age, size, or physical ability.

According to Kennefick, "The key to accommodating the physical needs of my clients is to do it without making the job look sterile and institutional." Bathrooms, for example, "should have user-friendly fixtures such as a tall toilet and a tub with low sides, grab bars at the most needed locations, shower seats, slip-resistant flooring, barrier-free roll-in showers, single-lever faucets, hand-held shower wands, and products that are easy to reach and operate."

Many of his clients have multiple sclerosis (MS) to varying degrees. Their predominant concern is to gain the ability to cleanse themselves without the help of an assistant. "It saddens me when I see what MS can do to people. My first customer, who by the way suggested The Accessibility Contractor name, routinely helped his afflicted wife into the bathroom to shower. He'd always open the glass door, support her under her arms as they slowly made their way into the shower, lift her feet over the 6-inch-tall shower curb, and seat and wash her on a plastic



stool. One day, he got frightened and fed up when his wife's foot got caught between the curb and the open shower door as he was pulling her in but he didn't realize it until it was too late."

It Doesn't Cost an Arm or a Leg

Converting their awkward and cumbersome shower arrangement to a safe, barrier-free roll-in shower, complete with a drop-down seat, four grab bars, multiple hand-held shower wands, an easy-to-open shower curtain, and nonslip floor tile that covered the entire bathroom floor, was Kenefick's first accessibility job. Many such bath/shower suites he installs cost \$12,000 to \$35,000 depending on level of difficulty and finishes. Simpler setups can cost \$9,000 to \$12,000.

If all that's needed is to replace the old toilet with a "tall boy" type of stool and install an accessible grab bar on each side wall of the water closet, Kenefick estimates \$900 to \$1,100 depending on fixtures.

Outside the bathroom, The Accessibility Contractor provides numerous accessibility improvements: exterior ramps and rails; elevators and elevettes; platform lifts for the wheelchair enabled; and stair riders that take you up and down simple or elaborate stairways inside homes.

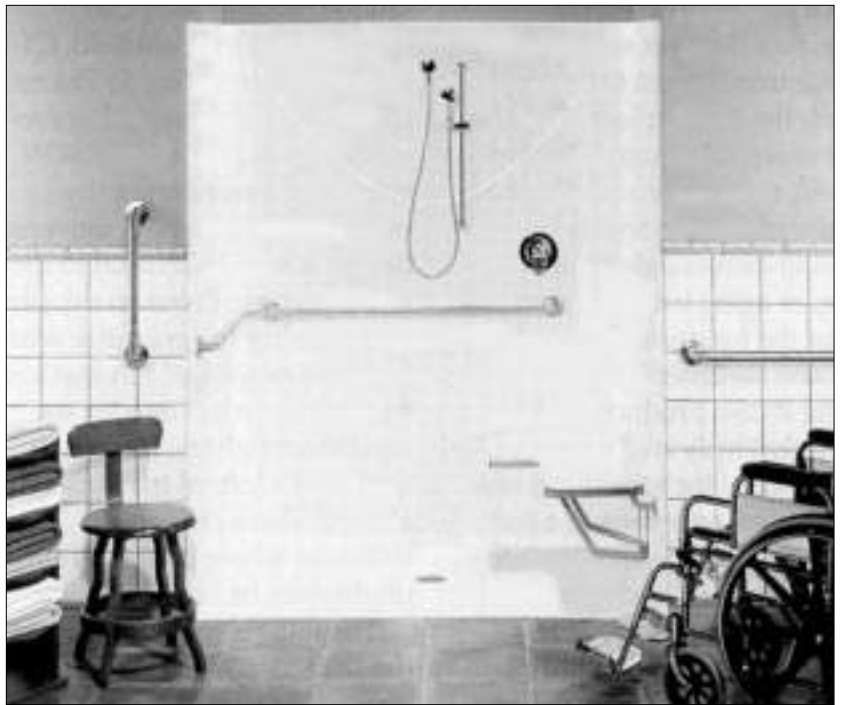
As others might see it, The Accessibility Contractor has no competition. Kenefick's clients call on him repeatedly. And the good news travels fast. With tongue in cheek, he tells me that his biggest competition is managed care and assisted living. "They're quick to have me renovate the home they love and are proud of. They'll do that first as they forgo the nursing home option."

Let's Get Organized

Of a number of organizations that assist the elderly and physically challenged, you can start with AARP. They've approached the topic with a big monetary commitment. Or you could connect with a local Area Agency on Aging (there are 670 in the United States), which handles public funding for aging-related services, and the Independent Living Centers (56 in California), whose focus is people with disabilities.

Rosemary Bakker, author of *Elder Design: Designing and Furnishing a Home for Your Later Years*, is keenly aware of the challenge. "There are so many avenues to reach these different groups," Bakker says. "But one of the biggest problems these people face is that they don't know how to find qualified remodeling contractors who are experienced in this field."

Kenefick recommends that you contact a local Independent Living Center that maintains



and provides, among other things, a list of designers, suppliers, and installers of mobility and accessibility systems and devices. Contact the State Independent Living Council (SILC) in Sacramento (916-445-0142, www.calsilc.org). You can find the SILC center in your county by logging on to www.cfilc.org/cgi-bin/lister.cgi. Request their up-to-date referral list and more information.

This roll-in shower by MAAX, Inc. can provide accessible safety, barrier-free entry, comfort, and style.

Design of the Times

Regardless of which user-accessible project is undertaken, remember this: Safety, comfort, and ease of use are critical — they allow aging and physically challenged homeowners to stay in their homes longer and more enjoyably.

Although he's fallen gently into the universal design niche, Kenefick is quick to say that his company offers so much more than that. "We offer the elderly and physically challenged a more personalized transformation of their home and living arrangement, a change they can really appreciate and enjoy." **A-P B**



Painter Tips for the Handyperson and Pro

Take These Three Seriously

By Warren Camp

☛ Paintbrush Selection

Brushing Up on Natural vs. Synthetic

Ready to brighten up the place with a new coat of paint? You no doubt were attentive in choosing the appropriate type of paint: latex, acrylic, alkyd, or oil. Then devote the same care to choosing your brushes.

Want an easy way to remind you of which brush bristle goes with various paints? To eliminate confusion, think of your hair. You've seen it absorb atmospheric moisture (water) and turn frizzy in humid weather. Natural-bristle brushes behave the same way in water, which is the base of latex and acrylic paints. A frizzy brush does a bad job, so save natural-bristle brushes for alkyd- and oil-based varnishes and paints.



Now we come to latex and acrylic paints. Synthetic-bristle brushes, like nylon or polyester, are best for latex and acrylic paints. But be careful. Some synthetic brushes are promoted as being compatible with both oil- and water-based paints, and switching paint types with the same brush can cause problems. Unless you clean and dry the brush thoroughly, you'll contaminate your paint and spoil the finish.

Tip: Avoid this potential problem the way professional painters do by buying parallel sets of brushes — keep one set just for latex and other water-based paints. A little care in choosing a brush will make your paint job — and its finish — a lot smoother.

☛ Excuse Me, Can I Have Your Nylons? Especially on Hot Days

Hey, that may not be the best pick-up line, but those nylons can save a painter time and money. Who knows? Your sweetheart nylon donor might even say to herself, "It's going for a worthy cause."

Seriously, rather than throwing away another pair of damaged nylons, clean them and take a pair of scissors and cut off the legging portions. Next, tie a knot at the knee (halfway point) of each leg piece and cut again just below the knot. You've now created two paint strainers per leg, one thigh section for five-gallon containers and one calf section for gallon-size containers.

Though nylons with runs may look atrocious to those donning them, they can be very effective at straining unfresh paint, varnishes, stains, and other liquids. Because they stretch so well, they rarely slide off the bucket when you pour material through them.

Remember: As with any strainer, always wet the strainer before use (with the same solvent as the material you'll strain). This keeps material from drying too quickly in the mesh, especially on hot days.



☛ High-Pressure Paint Gun Injuries Put Your Finger on It? No!

Ask experienced professional painters and they'll tell you that using a finger to clean a clogged nozzle of a high-pressure gun can cause the spray to forcefully inject paint into the finger. A mistake like this can lead to finger amputations. Always read and follow the manufacturer's use and maintenance instructions.

Upon accidental injection, seek medical attention immediately. Don't be misled into assuming there's no personal injury — fingers may not swell until hours later. **A-P B**

Resource Guide Update

New 2001 A-PB Advertisers

- **Attorneys** *Jonathan L. Steiner, P.C.*: This San Rafael-based practice handles business, real estate and construction disputes and transactions, and estate planning.
- **Attorneys** *McKague & Tong*: Specializes in construction and real property litigation throughout California.
- **Construction Staffing** *CLP Resources*: Missing the tradespeople needed to complete your Bay Area project? Let CLP Resources, a new member of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of NARI, fill in the missing pieces.
- **Energy Conservation** *SaveEnergy*: Whether you need insulation, thermal windows, or San Francisco energy efficiency inspections, John Gorman's firm can save you more than energy.
- **Environmental Inspections** *Forensic Analytical*: John Watson and his Hayward-based testing laboratory examine and survey your test samples for lead, microbes, asbestos, and more.
- **Kitchen & Bath** *Rev-A-Shelf*: This well-known storage-organizing manufacturer provides designers, contractors, and consumers throughout the world with innovative and convenient products to make cabinetry and closets more accessible and fun to use. Rev-A-Shelf is a national NARI member.
- **Kitchen & Bath** *Pull-Out Shelf Company*: Tired of getting on your knees to see and reach what's on the back shelf of your base cabinets? This new Oakland-based company provides and installs pull-out shelves for your existing cabinets — maximize cabinet storage and stop bending and stretching.
- **Property Management** *Cournale & Company*: This San Francisco-based real estate and property management firm has been in the business for more than 55 years.
- **Real Estate Loans** *emortgages.com*: Owner and mortgage broker Jehoshua Shapiro offers the "lowest mortgage rates in California."
- **Shower Doors** *Empire Shower Doors*: Provides custom as well as standard fabrication and installation — frameless units a specialty. A Petaluma showroom and free estimates in the greater Bay Area.
- **Tile and Stone** Oakland-based *On The Beam* is a local NARI member and a general contracting firm that specializes in tile and stone installations. Owners Lisa and Steve Schliff invite contractors to call On The Beam to subcontract their tile jobs.

Achievements and Changes

- *Ceramic Tile Design* has added its San Rafael showroom's address and phone number.
- *Duracite*, fabricator of Corian, natural stone, and cultured marble countertops, has opened a huge 66,000-square-foot factory/office/headquarters complex on its new 7-acre Fairfield property. Duracite, a NARI S.F.B.A. member, operates in 14 locations and has 6 full-display showrooms.
- *Hamilton Hauck, Esq.*, an attorney specializing in remodeling/construction law, has joined NARI's S.F.B.A. chapter.
- *Hannig Law Firm* has added three talented associates to its Redwood City-based law firm: Louis Abronson, Chleora Aglipay, and Teresa Cichuki.
- *Muratore Associates*, another NARI member and creator and provider of California home improvement contracts and subcontracts, has up-to-date samples available on request.

NARI Awards Won

NARI S.F.B.A. Leadership Awards — Spring 2001
(Note: CR designates the National Association of the Remodeling Industry's "Certified Remodeler" credential.)

Ten-Year NARI Pin

- *The Accessibility Contractor*, owned and operated by Russell Kennefick, CR, of San Mateo.
- *Beronio Lumber*, San Francisco's largest and most fully stocked building materials supplier.
- *Summitteers Radiant Heat*, an Oakland-based heat source supplier owned and operated by Marilyn Thurau, CRA.

Five-Year NARI Pin

- *FMS Projects*, an Oakland-based builder and remodeling contractor, owned and operated by Frank Silver, CR.
- *Noel Commins Construction*, a San Francisco builder and remodeler.
- *Wilkinson Design & Construction*, a San Francisco remodeling firm, owned and operated by Lyn and Pav Wilkinson, CR.

NARI's Supplier of the Year

- *Collier Warehouse*, a Bay Area supplier of windows, doors, skylights, solariums, and more, with a San Francisco showroom.

All advertising is subject to the publisher's approval. Advertising rates sent on request.

NARI S.F.B.A. membership is open to Bay Area trade professionals. Contact Keith Alward at 510-527-6498.



Sneak Previews

In our October issue of *All-Points Bulletin*:

- ✓ **Surge Protectors Galore** Sure, it's important to connect surge protectors for all of your televisions, appliances, computer equipment, and many other electrical gadgets. But find out which one surge protector protects everything in your building. It costs less than 10 household devices combined — gone are all those plug bars and twisted cords!
- ✓ **Heating Things Up** We'll have a series of articles that introduces highly efficient and safe fireplace inserts and wood stoves; finds fault with open fireplaces; helps you understand how and why chimneys are cleaned; shows the importance of knowing how to pick the best spark arrester; and more.
- ✓ **Fall Home Projects Checklist** The best way to preserve your home is to maintain it. Here's a detailed checklist covering exterior, foundation, structural lumber, plumbing, and electrical tasks that anyone can perform routinely.
- ✓ **Ask the Inspector** Our in-house inspector addresses subscribers' questions on choosing the appropriate caulk type and painting with latex paint the way professionals do.

Quake Devices Available Discount Deadline Extended

Three timely facts: Washington was struck by a 6.8 temblor just a few months ago; the April 18, 1906, 8.3-magnitude San Francisco earthquake's 95-year anniversary was recently celebrated; and you haven't yet seismically fastened your bookcases, bureaus, armoires, computer and monitor, television, stereo equipment, file cabinets, wall hangings, cabinet doors, grandfather clock, glassware, and small collectibles.

Fortunately, Camp Brothers Seismic Safety has tested and made available a number of effective and affordable protective devices. And our discount deadline has been extended to November 30, 2001.

Camp Brothers offers these nonstructural home and office stabilization devices by mail order. For a catalog, send \$3.20 to Camp Brothers, P.O. Box 986, Arnold, CA 95223. With the catalog, you'll receive a sample of QuakeHold glassware/collectibles putty.

But hurry! Orders of \$50 or more will receive a 20% discount—but they must be postmarked by November 30, 2001, to qualify for the discount.

About Warren Camp and *All-Points Bulletin*

All-Points Bulletin is prepared especially for homeowners, Realtors®, contractors, suppliers, designers, architects, attorneys, inspectors, title companies, appraisers, lenders, and developers.

We are pleased to bring you this informative periodical. It combines up-to-date information about all aspects of home remodeling, building maintenance and safety, real estate, and home inspections with experience accumulated from 20 years of remodeling homes; more than 6,900 house inspections; mediation and arbitration of numerous remodeling cases through alternative dispute resolution; expert witness testimony in remodeling, construction, and inspection matters; and public speaking engagements, written articles, and television appearances.

All-Points Bulletin welcomes your comments, concerns, and criticisms. Articles written by and for our readership are encouraged.

Warren Camp, publisher of *All-Points Bulletin*, provides the following services:

- Remodeling Facilitator
- Arbitrator
- Construction Manager
- Budget Analyst
- Expert Witness
- House Inspector
- Owner's Representative
- Consultant

All-Points Bulletin

All-Points Bulletin is published quarterly and is distributed to homeowners, home buyers, Realtors®, members of the home remodeling, contracting, and design communities, and others.

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