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Local Handyman offers tips to save money

By **ANDY BUSH, HANDYMAN**

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As the owner of Handyman Matters in McKinney, I try to show homeowners how to save money.

This year, more than ever, every cent counts.

Homeowners can save up to 18 percent of utility costs by properly preparing their homes this summer. Here are some tips to improve one's home and save money at the same time:

1. Fix any leaks in your home. It has been shown that leaking faucets and toilets account for 14 percent of all indoor water use, which can add up to 20 gallons of water per person per day. Tighten all loose faucets and toilets to prevent leakage. Go the extra step and caulk showers and tubs to prevent leaks and mold.
2. Weather stripping goes a long way. Seal doorways and windows to prevent warm outside air from creeping into the home. This will save a ton of money on air-conditioning costs throughout the year.
3. Install low-flow showerheads and toilets. New low-flush toilets use less than 1.6 gallons of water per flush; likewise, low-flow showerheads use up to 36 percent less water than a standard showerhead. Check with the local water department for rebates as much as \$150 for this simple upgrade.
4. Install a programmable thermostat. Programmable thermostats can cut energy bills by \$100 or more each year. For every degree a thermostat is adjusted (one degree higher in the summer months), one percent can be saved on energy bills.
5. Lighting. Low-voltage light bulbs will reduce one's electricity bill as well as one's carbon footprint. Also, garden and outside lighting can save money by utilizing solar-powered lights.
6. General Maintenance. Taking care of general maintenance and handling small problems before they become bigger issues can help save money in the long run. For example, a clogged downspout or gutter can cause water to come into contact with the foundation walls of your home and/or creep up under your roof so make sure gutters and downspouts are clean and flowing free at all times. Also, consider sealing decks and fences to prevent wood rot and sealing foundation cracks.

These fixes may seem little but they can help prevent costly future damage if they're dealt with as soon as possible," said Bush. "Owning a home is one of the biggest investments a person can make so addressing even the smallest issues right away will help any abode withstand the test of time.

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