



Home Inspection Services Newsletter

October, 2009

Educational: **Current Safety Standards**

Building standards continue to evolve; many changes are related to safety. Older homes lag behind current standards but that should not stop a home owner from upgrading. The following are current standards which you may wish to consider as safety upgrades to your home:

- **GFCI electrical protection:** All receptacles at kitchen counters, laundry room, bathrooms, exterior, sinks, garage, Jacuzzi, and hot tubs. Light circuits in swimming pools and spas.
- **ARC fault electrical circuit breakers:** All living area's 15 and 20 amp circuits except laundries, kitchens, bathrooms, and garages.
- **Tamper (child) resistant receptacles:** All receptacles
- **Smoke detectors:** In all bedrooms, stairways, and hallways
- **Railing and stair spacing:** Maximum openings of 4 inches
- **Garage doors:** Overhead garage doors should reverse direction when minimal pressure is applied to a closing door. Infra red sensors should be mounted 4 to 6 inches above the floor.
- **Carbon Monoxide Detectors:** In homes with gas or solid fuel burning appliances
- **Emergency Egress for bedrooms:** A window with 44 inch sill height max, 5.7 sq. ft. min clear opening, 20 inch min width, and 24 inch min height (unless bedroom has an exterior door).
- **Safety Glass:** Window glass within 24 inches (horizontally) of an exterior door, windows at bath tubs, adjacent to stair wells, or landings, low windows along walkways, and glass (or mirrors) in sliding doors
- **Swimming Pool barriers** that meet your municipality's standards

Other safety recommendations:

- Accessible **fire extinguishers** in the kitchen and garage
- **Hot water temperature** set at 120 degrees (to prevent scalding)
- **Anti-tip brackets** installed on free standing kitchen ranges

Question of the Month: **What's the typical life of an AC Unit?**

Many components can fail on an AC or heat pump system; most are replaceable for a small percentage of the cost of a system. The expensive components are the condenser, evaporator, and the cooling coils. The **typical life** of the system (defined as a major component failure) is 12 to 14 years.

Maintenance Items for Oct: **Yard Watering & Pool**

Days are shorter and temperatures are getting cooler. This means that plants need watering less often. Pool filter time can be reduced.

Plant watering Rule of thumb; water your yard plants the same amount of time but less often. My plant drips are now on a 10 day cycle and will go to a 14 day cycle in December. Depending on rain, most years I shut the sprinkler and drip system off for Jan, Feb, and March.

Pool Filter Rule of Thumb; run the pump one hour for every 10 degrees of water temperature (right now 6 to 7 hours). Remember, most electricity provider's rate plans charge less for night time energy use.

Safety Tip of the Oct: **Main Water shut off**

A gate valve (the one with the round handle) on a home's main water line may not have been operated in years. Old gate valves often fail when operated. Breakage can occur in the open or in the closed position. We recommend that you **test your water shut off valve periodically** to be sure that it will operate in case of emergency. It's also a good idea to have a "plumber's key" to facilitate shut off at the water meter. These wrenches cost about \$10.00 at Home depot, Ace Hardware, Lowes, etc.

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