

## General Tips *(for March)*

I was going to write about garage doors this month but I got a lot of requests for general tips, batteries, leaving the house for a month or so, etc., so here goes... When you change your smoke detector batteries make sure you change them all. Check all rooms including those upstairs if you have a second floor. Walt Trevaskis reminds us that there *is* a smoke detector or two in the attic. So that chirping you heard may not be a cricket but one of the smoke detectors.

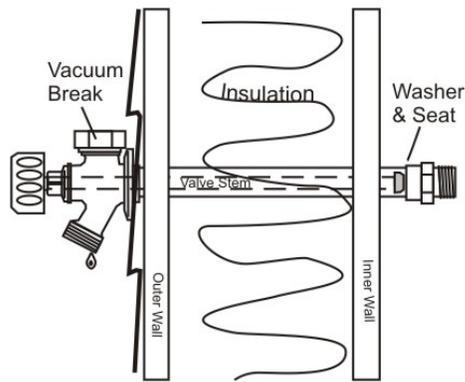


This exact thing happened to Dave Cutts after we thought we had changed every battery. Did you know the smoke alarms are all tied together? If one goes off, they will all alarm to alert you. To test this feature, hold the test button on one for a few seconds more after the alarm sounds. In a couple more seconds you will hear the rest of them go off. Use a helper to make sure they are all working.

While we are on batteries don't forget you have them in your thermostat, garage door remote and the remote opener outside if you have one. The TV and Cable remotes have batteries as well as the back-up batteries in your clock radios and some clocks run on batteries. Carbon Monoxide detectors have back up batteries too if you have any of those.

Do you have water stains at the bathroom ceiling fan(s)? More than likely it is not a roof leak but a poor hook up to the roof vent(s). Installers in a hurry may have aligned the fan outlet the wrong way and compensated for it by adding and/or looping extra discharge hose from the fan to the roof vent. This allows the warm moist air you are trying to get rid of to condense in the vent hose and run back as water drips. Take a flashlight to your attic and check. While you are up there you may find that some of the heater ducts have excess length also. Seems material was not a problem when they were building but how quick they could finish a job in man hours. You could be wasting a lot of heat if you are pushing the warm air through an extra 3 or 4 feet of ducting in the ice cold attic, not to mention the extra resistance, especially if it is kinked. You may want to get a professional to do this if you see a problem. Cutting the duct back and refastening it isn't so hard but there is the danger of putting your foot through the ceiling sheetrock and hurting yourself. Ouch!

Remove garden hoses from all outside faucets (late fall). If any hose, even freeze-proof reinforced hose, is



left connected to a frost-free sillcock, the faucet will not drain properly. Then it could freeze and burst during the winter months. If you closed the valve inside the house you will avert water damage but the valve will have to be replaced. Always replace this valve with a like valve that has a vacuum break. The vacuum break is required by law and prevents dirty and/or water with insecticides in it that may be in the

hose from being sucked back into the house and into your drinking water.

Leaving for an extended period in the winter? Tell your neighbors so they can watch your house. Set your thermostat at about 55 to 58 degrees. There are alarm units out there from \$25 to many hundreds that will flash a light or a horn or even call a telephone number you have pre-selected when the temperature in the house goes below 40 or 45 degrees. The device will keep calling every 15 minutes until answered. Do a Google search for 'temperature alarms'. If you use the one that turns on a light to warn a neighbor make sure it has at least two bulbs in case one blows out. Leave the cabinet doors under sinks on outside walls open to allow heat in; especially on the north side (If you face the direction the sun comes up in the morning and raise your left arm it will point north). Set your hot water heater to the vacation or pilot setting. This will prevent condensation and rust in the heat chamber. Shut off humidifier water if going away for an extended period. Loosen the connection after the valve under your sink or atop your hot water heater and allow the line to drain. If you do not drain the line it could still freeze and crack causing a problem when you return. When you have your heat set to around 70 degrees some of the heat escapes to the attic through the ceiling but if it is set to 55 there is not much of a variance and the attic will be very cold on windy days when the outside temperature gets low. If your hot water heater is in the garage leave it on the vacation setting and make sure there are no drafts, particularly in or around garage doors. Pull the plug on the garage door opener and wedge door fully closed if it doesn't seal well. The temperature difference between the garage and house is about 25 degrees with the heat on normal and more when set to 55. That could allow the garage to get down to 30 degrees and possibly lower in severe weather. This would freeze any water pipes in your garage.

If you have hot water heat (baseboard heat), do not turn off your main water supply. If you have a slight leak somewhere and the furnace cannot make up the water automatically, a sensor will detect low water and shut down the system. If the heat doesn't come on everything will freeze and burst if it gets cold enough.

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