

Spring HOME IMPROVEMENT



Upgrade Bathroom Safety Features

Bathrooms can benefit from updates that improve their form and function. While styles and color patterns may inspire bathroom renovations, improvements to safety also should be considered. Bathrooms can be one of the most dangerous rooms in a house. Bath and shower areas account for about two-thirds of accidental injuries in these spaces. Many other injuries involve the toilet. In 2008, a thorough investigation of bathroom dangers conducted by the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that mishaps near the bathtub, shower, toilet, and sink caused an estimated 234,094 nonfatal injuries in the United States among people aged 15 years and older. Seniors are particularly vulnerable in the bathroom due to reduced mobility and flexibility, visual impairment and other factors. However, some key modifications can make bathrooms much safer for aging populations.

- Raised toilet seat: Install an ADA-compliant raised toilet seat.

Standard toilet seats are roughly 15" high, but elevated seats can raise the bowl an additional two to four inches. Another option is to invest in risers that can be attached to an existing toilet.

- Grab bars: Seniors may use towel holders as grab bars, which don't have stability and can dislodge from the wall. Install secured side grip bars by the toilet and inside the shower to make maneuvering easier.
- Water temperature: Seniors may be vulnerable to hot water temperatures. Lower the water temperature setting on the hot water heater. StaySafe.org recommends 120 F.
- Faucets: Change faucet handles to paddle-style handles rather than knobs. Knobs can be challenging to grip for those with arthritis in their hands. Also, handles that are easier for seniors to use can reduce the risk of the elderly losing their balance as they attempt to gain leverage to turn the water on and off.
- Nonslip mats: Nonslip mats or tape strips can be used in showers and tub bottoms, as well as outside of the shower to reduce the risk of slips and falls. Rugs should have rubberized, slip-resistant backing.
- Rounded corners: Choose counters and fixtures with rounded corners. Should a senior fall against something, the rounded corner may prevent serious injury.
- Shower benches and transfer seats: Benches and transfer seats make it easier getting in and out of the shower. Also, sitting while showering reduces the risk of becoming light-headed or losing balance.
- Walk-in tubs/showers: Minimizing the threshold to the shower or bathtub is an important safety feature. Some manufacturers make walk-in tubs with doors that secure and make watertight seals. Showers that don't have a lip or tub to scale also are better for seniors.
- Lighting: Eyesight weakens over time, so improve lighting with combinations of overhead lighting and softer side lighting. Night lights or soft-glowing toilet lights can make it easier to get around the bathroom in the middle of the night.

These are just some improvements that can create safer bathroom environments for seniors.

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Signs A Roof Needs Repair Or Replacement

Many homeowners believe a roof is a once-in-a-lifetime investment. But roof damage can force homeowners to replace a roof regardless of how much time has lapsed since the roof was installed. The average life span of a roof depends on when the roof was installed and the materials it is made from. 3-tab shingles may last 10 to 15 years, architectural shingles can endure for 15 to 20 years, and tile may last 35 to 50 years. RPS Metal Roofing indicates a metal roof may last as long as 70 years. However, climate and color of the roof also will affect its longevity. Homeowners would be wise to consider these factors when determining if a roof is in need of repairs or replacement.

- **ROOF AGE:** The age of the roof is a major factor in determining if it will need to be replaced or if repairs can be made to isolated damage. Individuals who live in neighborhoods where neighbors are now replacing roofs will likely find it is time to consult a roofing company. Homeowners also can check to see if they have any receipts that indicate the roof's installation date so they have an idea about its age.
- **GRAIN IN GUTTERS:** Roofing shingles are designed to overlap, and sealant keeps them steady. Friction, weather and

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atmospheric changes can impact sealant and cause degradation. Gutters with grainy material in them could indicate worn out sealant and shingles.

- **RIDGE DAMAGE:** Ridges are spots where two separate areas meet and often are important to the structural integrity of the roof. If the roof ridge is showing signs of wear, it could be time to repair or replace it.
- **CURLED SHINGLE EDGES:** If shingle tabs are curled or cupped, the shingles may need to be replaced. But if curling is extensive, a whole new roof may need to be installed.
- **BALD SPOTS OR LOST PORTIONS OF THE ROOF:** Missing granules and missing shingles are reasons to consult a pro for a roof evaluation.
- **LEAKS INDOORS:** Homeowners who find dark streaks or moisture in the attic may discover that water is penetrating the roof underlay. Water often comes in around chimney flashing. Other water signs are blistering and bubbling in walls.
- **INCOMING LIGHT:** Look up through the attic and see if any light is coming through the roof, which may indicate there are cracks or holes in the roof.
- **AESTHETICS:** If a homeowner doesn't like the look of the roof from a design standpoint, a replacement also may be warranted.

Roofs can last many years, but the presence of certain signs indicates replacement or repairs will be necessary.



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The Different Ways To Repair A Driveway

Asphalt driveways do not last forever. Over time, weather and general usage can degrade the driveway surface, resulting in cracks, pitting and more. Ultraviolet rays, salt and automotive fluids also can affect the appearance and functionality of a driveway. An unsightly driveway can adversely affect curb appeal and resale potential. Homeowners have to consider various factors when it comes to repairing driveways. They may have the option of getting the driveway resurfaced, resealed or repaved, and each project is unique. RESURFACING: Resurfacing is generally simpler and faster than installing a new asphalt driveway. With resurfacing, any cracks are filled in to create an even base. Then a new layer of asphalt is applied over the existing one. That new layer can range in thickness from 1.5 to 3". A heavy rolling machine will then smooth and flatten the layers together. If the driveway has minor cracking or cracking, then resurfacing can be a cost-effective strategy. RESEALING: a driveway, also called sealcoating, is another repair strategy. Resealing helps the drive-

way last longer. The driveway needs to be clean and dry, with holes and cracks filled prior to seal-coating. Start at the far edge of the driveway and seal that area by "cutting-in" by hand for a neat edge. Afterward the rest of the driveway can be sealed using a squeegee or broom. This project can be completed within 2 or 3 days if no precipitation is forecast. REPAVING: A project best left to professionals, repaving typically involves the removal of an existing driveway and the installation of a new one. The sub-grade layer is essential in the process for a smooth look. Contractors also will assess soil and grading when doing work. The construction blog Main Infrastructure says the new asphalt driveway can vary in thickness between two and six inches, depending on budget and need. The contractor also can advise if full-depth asphalt application or an aggregate base is practical. Assessing the condition of driveway can give homeowners a better idea about which type of repair project best suits their property.

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Signs Of Winter Lawn Damage

Mother Nature can be harsh on a lawn, and it's up to homeowners to nurse their lawns back to health after they endure the elements. That's often the case when winter ends and homeowners uncover signs of damage to their lawns.

Homeowners cannot begin to repair winter lawn damage until they learn to identify it, and the following are some telltale signs that winter took a harsh toll on a landscape.

• **WILTED GRASS:** Many things can cause grass to wilt over the course of winter, so homeowners may have to put on their sleuth's cap to determine why grass that was healthy as recently as late fall is now wilted as the spring bloom begins. Grass that's adjacent to walkways and driveways might have

wilted due to the application of de-icing solutions. Such products can prevent the formation of ice on driveways and walkways. However, when they're tracked onto the grass by people or animals or blown there by winter winds, grass can wilt. A deep watering in spring can flush any lingering solution from the lawn. In future winters, homeowners can be as careful as possible when applying de-icing solutions, making a concerted effort to avoid spreading any onto the grass and limited applications to areas of the driveway and walkways that are not close to the grass.

• **BROWN PATCHES:** The National Association of Landscape Professionals notes that brown patches in a lawn often develop after heavy

snowfall. Such patches tend to develop where large piles of shoveled snow were deposited, so homeowners can inspect alongside driveways and walkways. The NALP advises homeowners to rake away part of the brown patches first. If green tissue is emerging beneath, then the lawn will likely be fine in due time. However, if the area beneath is not green and surrounding areas are already turning green, homeowners may need to rake up

dead tissue before applying topsoil to the affected spots. Once topsoil is spread, some grass seed can be spread and the grass should regain its green glory.

• **GRAY OR PINK GRASS:** Another indicator of winter lawn damage linked to snow is gray or pink grass. The NALP reports that this is a byproduct of snow mold caused by lingering snow. Action may be unnecessary, as the NALP notes these circular patterns often go away on their



own. If not, raking the affected areas might be enough to get the lawn on the road to recovery. If the issue continues to linger after raking, a topsoil application and subsequent seeding may be necessary. These are three common signs of winter lawn damage in areas

where snowfall is significant during the coldest months of the year. Homeowners concerned about their damaged lawns are urged to contact a local landscape professional to correct any issues that linger into spring.



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