



A SPECIAL REPORT

Cost Efficient Ways Seniors can Maintain both their Home and Equity

14 Common Home Appliance Problems and How to Repair Them Yourself

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ABOUT SENIORS REAL ESTATE SPECIALISTS



“Seniors Real Estate Specialists (SRES) are licensed salespeople or brokers, members in good standing of the National Association of REALTORS®, who have taken the additional hours of training needed to help senior clients make wise decisions when buying, selling or investing in real estate. Many seniors have not invested or sold in years and their issues, requirements and needs are special in order to protect and enhance their equity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Corliss is a sixth-generation Californian, who grew up in Los Angeles. A Realtor since 1962, Tim has always been on the cutting edge of real estate. His passion for serving real estate buyers and sellers has gained him tremendous recognition and respect throughout California and the nation. He enjoys the challenges of understanding & solving clients’ problems while fulfilling their needs.

Tim opened Corliss & Associates Realtors in 1964. His firm grew to 15 offices with more than 300 agents with divisions in investment property, mortgages, escrows and insurance. When he sold the company to Merrill Lynch in 1982, Tim remained on board as senior vice president of Merrill Lynch Realty until 1987 when he opened Westside Properties.

Tim’s numerous professional designations include the following:

- Graduate, Realtors Institute (GRI)
- Certified Residential Specialist (CRS)
- Certified Residential Broker (CRB)
- Certified International Property Specialist (CIPS)
- Seniors Real Estate Specialist (SRES).

Tim is a member of the California Association of Real Estate Teachers and a Master Instructor for the California Association of Realtors' continuing education program. He is also a lecturer and author, and has spoken at UCLA, USC, Pepperdine and Loyola Marymount universities.

Tim's extensive experience in representing senior clients for more than 30 years and his vast knowledge of senior issues make him eminently qualified to author this comprehensive report. Tim says his most memorable business accomplishment is that he has personally negotiated more than 5,600 real estate transactions and neither he nor any of his clients has stepped foot inside a court room as a result of any one of those transactions.

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14 COMMON HOME APPLIANCE PROBLEMS AND HOW TO FIX THEM YOURSELF

1. Why should I care about the proper maintenance of my home appliances?



Not only is a home the place you live, it is also your most *valuable and important* financial asset. That's why it is so important to keep up with home maintenance chores. Making any necessary repairs as the months and years go by will help sustain your home's market resale value.

Neglecting home maintenance can lead to a laundry list of repairs that may quickly become too overwhelming, frightening or expensive to tackle all at one time. This situation can be especially costly if you unexpectedly need to sell your home in a hurry. Generally, homebuyers pay top dollar only for those homes have been kept up to date and are well maintained.

Home maintenance begins with acquiring a familiarity with the major appliances and systems in your home and knowing how and when these appliances and systems should be serviced. This report outlines easy steps you can take to maintain your home and keep it in good repair for the eventual day when you decide to sell it. Share this information with your spouse, your children and anyone else who may be helping you maintain your home. The bottom line is that owning a home should be enjoyable, not unduly burdensome or exceedingly costly due to neglected maintenance.

2. What are some easy maintenance tasks I can do to Avoid costly repairs to my home's major systems?



Caring for your home begins with a thorough knowledge of the home's appliances and components and any prior maintenance that has been performed. Create a checklist of the major appliances and systems in your home, along with the model

and serial number of each appliance, the date of its last check-up, and any comments on its working condition.

After that, the following tasks will help you keep your home's appliances and systems in good working order:

Heating System

- Replace the filters in your heating system every month, and each year have a professional service the system a month before you plan to use it for the first time.

Electrical System

- To prevent power outages, don't plug an excessive number of appliances into any one circuit.

Air-Conditioning System

- Replace the filters in your air-conditioning system every month, and each year have a professional service the system a month before you plan to use it for the first time.
- Keep the condensing unit free of debris.

Refrigerator

- Clean the interior shelves, shell, and gasket every three months.
- Clean the coils, which are located on the back or underneath the refrigerator, at least once a year.

Dishwasher

- Use vinegar to remove mineral deposits on the heating element.
- Make sure stacked dishes don't block or damage the water-spraying arms.

Garbage Disposal

- To clean your garbage disposal, push a full tray of ice cubes through it while running the cold water.
- To prevent the garbage disposal from becoming clogged, always run the water when the disposal is on and for at least two minutes after it is off.

3. **Why are my dishes still dirty after I run my dishwasher?**



The first possibility is that the water running through your dishwasher isn't hot enough to thoroughly clean your dishes. Make sure the running water from your hot water tap is between 140°F and 150°F, and check the hot water setting on your water heater.

Another possible explanation is that your dishes haven't been adequately rinsed before being loaded into the dishwasher or they haven't been stacked properly inside the dishwasher. Rinsing dishes before loading them is a good way to ensure they will be cleaned during the wash cycle. Dishes should be loaded so they face the direction of the water-spraying arms to get them completely clean. If dishes are loaded too close together, they may block the water-spraying arms. This could prevent them from being thoroughly cleaned.

Old dishwasher detergent or a malfunctioning detergent dispenser may be responsible for still-dirty dishes. If the detergent is old, run the load of dishes again with fresh detergent. If the detergent is fresh, remove any hardened detergent or mineral deposits from the dispenser cap. Be sure the dispenser lid isn't blocked. If these solutions don't solve the problem, the dishwasher's timer may be defective.

4. **Help! The water won't stop running in my dishwasher, and it's leaking out all over the floor!**



If the water won't stop running, the water inlet valve may be stuck. Try to shut the valve. It is also possible that the dishwasher's timer may be defective and need to be replaced. A third problem might be the overflow switch. If the switch is frozen in the "empty" position, the water will continue to run.

If water is leaking *out* of the dishwasher, check the door seal and hinges for damage and, if necessary, replace the seal or the hinges. If that doesn't solve the

problem, the heating element nuts may be loose and need to be tightened. Finally, it may be possible that the hose clamps are loose. In that case, you may have to move the entire dishwasher to see whether a hose connection has come loose in the back of the appliance.

5. When I turn on the garbage disposal, the motor hums, but the disposal doesn't grind. What's wrong?



An easy solution is to free the flywheel and push the reset button on the garbage disposal. If that doesn't solve the problem, the motor bearings may be frozen. Call a qualified contractor. You may need a new garbage disposal unit.

6. The garbage disposal is making an unusual amount of noise. What's wrong?



Unusual noise generally means a non-food object, perhaps something metallic, has become lodged in the garbage disposal, preventing it from grinding. Turn the unit off, then reach into the drain with tongs and remove any object that may be blocking the disposal. You should also check the mounting screws and tighten them if necessary. Loose screws tend to make unusual sounds when the garbage disposal is turned on and are easy to repair. Check the flywheel and if it is broken, replace it. If none of these solutions solves the problem, the garbage disposal's motor may be defective. Call a qualified contractor.

7. My garbage disposal is leaking. What should I do?



A leaky garbage disposal is a general indication that your sink or drain connections are loose or the housing gasket is damaged. To fix this problem, tighten the flanges holding the sink connection gasket or replace the gasket.

8. The water in my sink is too hot. Can I make it cooler?

A thermostat controls the temperature of the hot water from an electric water heater. To adjust the temperature, simply turn it to lower number. If that doesn't make the water cool enough, there may not be enough insulation around the thermostat. Pack the insulation more tightly, and then test the hot water temperature again. If the water is still too hot, you may need to replace the water heater's heating elements and the thermostat.

9. My hot water supply is inadequate and water is leaking from my electric water heater. How can I solve these problems?

An improperly set thermostat can result in an inadequate supply of hot water. Turn the thermostat to a higher number to solve this problem. You may need to install a larger water heater if the capacity isn't sufficient for the number of people in your home.

Water leakage usually occurs when the gasket, seal, or safety valve on the heating element is defective. Check the gasket and safety valve for damage and replace them if necessary. If the plumbing connection seems to be the source of the leak, call a plumber to investigate further. Another possible explanation for leakage, especially from an older water tank, is that the tank has rusted through, allowing water to seep out. If that is the case, you will need to buy a new water heater.

10. I suspect that water from my central air-conditioning system might be leaking into my walls and the ceiling. What should I do?

If your air-conditioning system is installed in your attic, the drain hose probably is the culprit. Oftentimes, the drain hose from the condenser pan is clogged and, consequently, unable to empty the water passing through it. To fix this problem, inspect the drain hose and clean out anything that may be clogging it.

SPECIAL SENIORS' REPORT

11. Why doesn't my refrigerator cool well, and why is it constantly running?



A number of problems could be contributing to this situation. Check the thermostat setting on the refrigerator. If food isn't kept cold enough, you may need to adjust the thermostat to a cooler setting. Dirty condenser coils can also reduce a refrigerator's cooling power, so be sure to clean the coils.

If your refrigerator runs constantly and the door is frequently opened and shut, the door gasket could be damaged, preventing the door from closing properly. Inspect the door gasket and replace it, if necessary. Then make sure the door closes completely. If the door is sagging, it should be straightened or replaced.

Your refrigerator's ability to cool also depends on how well it condenses moisture. The appliance may need to be defrosted more often, especially if heavy frost accumulation is present. If the insulation in the refrigerator's door and interior sides feels wet, open the door on a dry day and let the inside of the refrigerator dry out. Be sure to repair or replace any cracked panels.

12. My refrigerator has stopped running, but the inside light is on and I hear a clicking sound. What's wrong, and how can I fix it?



A defective condenser fan or dirty condenser coils could cause this problem. Make sure the condenser fan is running properly and try cleaning the coils.

Another possibility is that the voltage reaching your refrigerator is incorrect. Use a voltage meter to check that the voltage is set between 105v and 125v. If the setting is not within this range, call your electric company for assistance.

A defective thermostat or condenser could cause these problems as well. Call a qualified contractor to inspect your refrigerator.

13. My clothes washer isn't working. The tub fills with water, but the machine doesn't run. What's wrong?



The safety switch for the lid may be tripped, causing the machine to pause during the washing cycle. Make sure the lid is completely closed. If nothing is preventing the lid from closing, check the safety switch. It is also possible that there may be too much laundry in the tub. Remove some items, and then wait 15 minutes for the motor to reset. If these solutions don't solve the problem, the washing machine may have a defective motor. Call a qualified contractor.

14. Help! My washing machine is leaking!



Water leakage in most household appliances is usually caused by defective hoses. Make sure the hose connection from the washing machine to the faucet is tight. Examine all the other hoses and look for rips or tears that might cause the hose to leak. Replace any hoses that appear defective. The washing machine may also have a damaged gasket or cracked mixing valve that need to be replaced. Finally, check the overflow switch or sensor and replace any non-functioning parts.