



# Nuts & Bolts

Volume 27, Number 6  
November-December 2009

a newsletter from Home Repair Resource Center

For nearly thirty years, HRRC has been able to offer our hands-on repair workshops at no charge. We must now change that practice. As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, we will ask most workshop attendees to pay a modest materials fee.

## New Workshop Fees: what you need to know

Although Home Repair Resource Center receives some funding from the City of Cleveland Heights, that funding does not cover all the costs of providing Project Repair’s services. After much consideration, HRRC’s Board has determined that, as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, we must begin charging a modest materials fee.

Questions? Here’s what you need to know:

### How much will I be charged?

The fee you will pay is based on a sliding scale, depending on your household income. Additional discounts will be given if you purchase a “punch card” for several classes.

Number of Classes	Above-Moderate Income	Low-Moderate Income	Low Income	Very Low Income
1	\$10	\$8	\$5	\$0
5	\$30	\$20	\$10	\$0
10	\$50	\$30	\$20	\$0
20	\$80	\$50	\$35	\$0

### How do I pay?

Fees may be paid **by cash or check**, and may be purchased in person at our office or through the *continued on page 3*

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### Removing old wall and floor coverings can be the hardest part of updating your home decor.

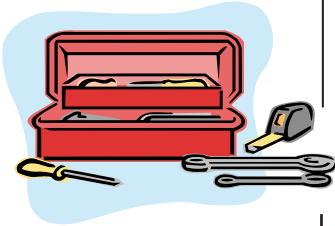
Sometimes you can find a tool to help you, but be prepared to spend a lot of time and “elbow grease” to get the job done!



# Send us your “annual report”

As we do every year, we are enclosing a card for you to let us know what repairs you completed in 2009 with the help of Project Repair. Whether you attended a workshop, borrowed a tool, asked questions of Jim, or used a handout or video from our library, we need to know what projects you did with that help. This information is very important to HRRC – we count both the **number of people** who report doing repairs and the **value of what they do**.

When you list each project, please provide enough detail that we can give it an approximate value. No job is too small to mention; we’ll add it to all the other jobs reported to get one measure of HRRC’s impact on Cleveland Heights. Please get the information to us **by December 15th** – by mail, email, personal delivery, or phone. We hope every PR participant will make the effort to help!



## Thanks to our workshop hosts

Thanks to the following Project Repair participants for hosting a workshop in 2009: Connie Martien, Geneva Foster, Yolanda Woods, Miriam Sullivan, Stephanie Griffin, Michael Buescher & Kari Elsila, Starlette Sizemore-Rice, Leslie Braidech, Nancy Seifert & Jim Wagner, Deb Magid, Chris Marshall, and Nancy Newman.

Each year we have more offers to host workshops than we can accommodate. If you are interested in hosting a class next summer, the March-April issue of *Nuts & Bolts* will tell you how to volunteer your project. As a workshop host, you’ll need to participate in the class and pay for the materials that are installed (HRRC can help LMI homeowners with part of that cost).

### Holiday Closings:

Wednesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>  
(Veterans Day)

Thursday & Friday,  
November 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>  
(Thanksgiving weekend)

Thursday & Friday,  
December 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>  
(Christmas holiday)

Friday, January 1<sup>st</sup>  
(New Year’s Day)

*Plan ahead to get any tools  
or information you’ll need.*

## Please note:

If you have not used Project Repair’s services during the last two years, we will remove you from our *Nuts & Bolts* mailing list in January, unless you receive our newsletter by email. Previous members can reactivate their membership at any time our services are needed in the future, and the workshop schedule can always be found on our website, [www.hrrc-ch.org](http://www.hrrc-ch.org).

# New workshop fees

*continued from page 1*

mail. You can pay the fee when you come to a class - but, we really urge you to buy your “punch cards” in advance, since we will have limited time on the nights of the workshop. Also, note that if the workshop is being held “on site” away from our Teaching Center, you will not be able to purchase multi-class “punch cards,” and will have to pay the single-class rate (or use a “punch card” you purchased previously).

## **How do I know which income category applies to me?**

We’ll use the same categories that are on the Income Form you fill out each year, based on guidelines we receive from HUD each spring. You simply add up the gross income, from all sources, that will be coming into your household in the next year. Currently, the guidelines are as follows:

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Above-Moderate Income</b>	<b>Low-Moderate Income</b>	<b>Low Income</b>	<b>Very Low Income</b>
1	above \$36,300	\$22,700 - \$36,300	\$13,600 - \$22,700	less than \$13,600
2	above \$41,500	\$25,900 - \$41,500	\$15,500 - \$25,900	less than \$15,500
3	above \$46,650	\$29,150 - \$46,650	\$17,500 - \$29,150	less than \$17,500
4	above \$51,850	\$32,400 - \$51,850	\$19,450 - \$32,400	less than \$19,450
5	above \$56,000	\$35,000 - \$56,000	\$21,000 - \$35,000	less than \$21,000
6	above \$60,150	\$37,600 - \$60,150	\$22,550 - \$37,600	less than \$22,550

Feel free to call us at 381-9560 if you have questions. And, remember that, if your income category changes during the year (different job, new household member, etc), you can simply ask to fill out a new form.

## **How will the “punch card” work?**

When you purchase a punch card, you’ll get a wallet-size card good for the number of classes you have paid for. The card will be personalized in your name, but it can be used for other family members who live at the same address. You simply bring the card with you to the workshops of your choice, and we’ll punch it to mark your attendance. When you have used up the number of classes you have paid for, throw away that card and purchase a new one.

HRRC has tried to make this procedure an easy one. We trust that you will understand the need for this new policy, and that you will bear with us as we work out any “kinks” in the process over the next few months.

# Old Wall & Floor Coverings



As houses age and home decors become “dated,” many homeowners seek to improve the look of their house by installing new wall coverings and flooring materials. (As we approach the holiday season, these projects seem to become especially popular.) The biggest problem most people face, however, is not putting on the new material, but rather getting an old, deteriorated covering off the wall or floor surface. Here are a few hints to make such jobs easier.

You can take up old floor tile or sheet flooring with a **chisel-edged scraper**. The hardest part is usually getting the old adhesive off the floor surface. A **floor scraper** made for this purpose works best for this job, or you can use an **ice chipper** (a tool that looks like a straightened-out garden hoe) – but, in any case, you’ll need a fair amount of elbow grease.

If you need to cut into existing walls or floors, a reciprocating saw (such as Milwaukee Tool’s “Sawzall”™) can be equipped with a blade that will cut through nail-embedded wood or plaster. This tool makes removing old built-in cabinets easier, as well.

For particularly stubborn adhesives, use a **heat gun** to soften the material before removing it with the scraper. (Note: don’t try to remove, sand or level **asbestos flooring or its backing**; instead, install new floor covering directly over it.)

For carpeting and its foam padding, use a **utility knife** to cut the materials into smaller strips that you can handle more easily. To remove the staples used to tack the padding into the hardwood flooring, a **brad puller** – a v-shaped “mini crowbar” with a screwdriver handle – works best. Sometimes the foam padding will have become imbedded into the varnish. The best way to remove it is to scrape it off with a floor scraper, ice chipper or a **straight-bladed paint scraper**, being careful not to scar the hardwood floor beneath. Sometime **paint thinner** will remove part of the residue, but it is highly flammable – and, you’ll definitely need to refinish the hardwood flooring afterwards.

Wallpaper can be especially difficult to get off your walls, particularly if there are multiple layers or if the old paper has been painted over. A **steamer** will sometimes work wonders, but with

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## Old wall & floor coverings

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some papers or adhesives, it may not accomplish much of anything. **Chemical removers** are another option, but with foil, vinyl, or vinyl-covered wall coverings, you'll need to perforate the material to allow the chemicals or steam to get behind it and work on the adhesive. Use a **perforating tool**, such as Zinsser's PaperTiger™, to puncture the paper without scarring the plaster wall beneath it.



*PaperTiger™*

Residue from old, poorly-done plaster repairs can be smoothed out with a **pole sander**, which has a swivel-head that holds a piece of sanding screen. You'll need to exert some physical effort and clean up all the plaster dust that is produced. For this reason, you may choose to use an **electric drywall sander** made especially for this purpose; a shroud surrounds the sanding head and controls the plaster dust so it is sucked into an attached power vacuum, reducing the amount of clean up needed later. (Don't use a regular electric sander for this job, because plaster dust will ruin its motor.) If the plaster is covered with layers of old paint, make sure you take precautions to prevent contamination from leaded paint dust (*see the handouts in our Resource Library on "Controlling Lead-Based Paint during Your Paint Control Project."*)

If you need to cut into existing walls or floors, a **reciprocating saw** (such as Milwaukee Tool's "Sawzall"™) can be equipped with a blade that will cut through nail-embedded wood or plaster. This tool makes removing old built-in cabinets easier, as well.

Wallpaper can be especially difficult to get off your walls, particularly if there are multiple layers or if the old paper has been painted over. A steamer will sometimes work wonders, but with some papers or adhesives, it may not accomplish much of anything.

Cleaning-up debris as you go along will make your job site safer and less likely to damage any new material you apply. Wash down walls and floors with warm water and TSP (trisodium phosphate). Pick up chunks of plaster or other large debris with a stiff push broom and a snow shovel. Heavy plastic refuse bags (3 mils or better) that will withstand sharp pieces and a lot of weight are available at builders' supply stores and well worth the extra cost.

Even if you are using a contractor to install your new wall or floor covering, removing the old materials yourself may allow you to negotiate a lower price. Just make sure you have given yourself enough time to do the job properly before the professional is scheduled to start.



# Workshop Schedule

Our Project Repair workshops will continue to cover various aspects of remodeling a kitchen (projects that can also apply to other areas in the house.) These free classes are open to Cleveland Heights residents. Call 381-9560 to save your spot.

Note that, as of January, our new materials fee schedule will apply (*see article on page 1*). Call us for more information, and plan ahead to get a discounted multi-class punch card.

## November

### **Drywall Installation**

Monday, November 2nd, 7 - 9 p.m.

At this class, you'll learn to measure, cut, install and finish drywall, for new walls or to repair damaged plaster.

### **Kitchen Cabinets**

Monday, November 9th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Installing new cabinets yourself can really cut the cost of your kitchen remodeling project. Learn some "tricks of the trade" that will make the job easier.

### **Laminate Countertops**

Monday, November 16th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Pre-made counters may not be the best option for your kitchen. Learn how to laminate a wood "blank" with Formica® and install it in place.

### **Installing a Kitchen Sink & Faucet**

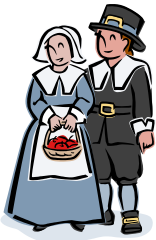
Monday, November 23rd, 7 - 9 p.m.

Learn how to cut a hole in your counter, install your new sink, and hook up the water and drain lines.

### **Ceramic Tile**

Monday, November 30th, 7 - 9 p.m.

Learn how to lay out and space tiles, cut pieces for edges or around fixtures, and maintain and repair a tiled surface – whether on a floor, wall, countertop or backsplash.



## December



### Vinyl Sheet Flooring

Monday, December 7th, 7 - 9 p.m.

We'll show you how to work with sheet vinyl flooring – how to determine how much material you'll need, how to cut and lay it out for a smooth, tight fit, and how to avoid common installation mistakes.

### Vinyl Floor Tile

Monday, December 14th, 7 - 9 p.m.

You'll learn how to install vinyl floor tile – where to start, how to trim the edges, and how to ensure a long-lasting job.

## HRRC's Financial Fitness Series

Home Repair Resource Center's interactive Financial Fitness series will help you develop your money skills, provide you with strategies for improving your credit, and teach you how to protect your home investment. Call **381-6100** for information or to reserve your spot in these FREE classes (all 6 - 8 p.m.):

**November** *Classes to be held at the CH-UH Main Library, 2345 Lee Road*

- |    |         |   |
|----|---------|---|
| 3  | Tuesday | Power of a Personal Budget                      |
| 10 | Tuesday | Creditworthy Equals Choices                     |
| 17 | Tuesday | Understanding Mortgages & Refinancing           |
| 24 | Tuesday | Avoiding Delinquency & Foreclosure Intervention |

**December** *Classes to be held at the CH-UH Main Library, 2345 Lee Road*

- |   |           |   |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | Tuesday   | Home Maintenance for New Homeowners             |
| 2 | Wednesday | Power of a Personal Budget                      |
| 3 | Thursday  | Creditworthy Equals Choices                     |
| 8 | Tuesday   | Avoiding Delinquency & Foreclosure Intervention |
| 9 | Wednesday | Understanding Mortgages & Refinancing           |

### Drop-In Clinics:

A financial counselor will be available for 15-20 minute sessions to answer individual questions about foreclosure, credit or other financial concerns. In-depth counseling appointments can be scheduled to follow up. Clinics will be held 1 - 3 p.m. at the following locations:



- Main Library: Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> & Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>
- Noble Library: Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> & Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>
- University Hts. Library: Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> & Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>
- South Euclid Library: Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> & Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>



*Free advice  
from the experts . . .*

information sessions presented by

## **Home Repair Resource Center**

*a community nonprofit organization*

### **Reducing Energy Consumption: Energy Star Ratings and Energy Tax Credits**

*Michael Higgins, Ohio Department of Development*

Learn how to choose energy-efficient heating and cooling systems, appliances, doors, and windows, and how you can qualify for the new energy tax credits.

**Thursday, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009 - 7 pm**

### **Bathroom Remodeling**

*Alex Pesta, AIA, LEED AP, Architect, City Architecture*

Learn how material choices, fixture clearances, and code requirements will affect your remodeling project – and its cost.

**Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009 - 7 pm**

### **Reducing Energy Costs: Getting the Most Bang for Your Buck**

*Pam Pierce, LEED AP, Green Accredited, Energy Consultant*

If you're thinking about retrofitting your home to save on energy costs, come and learn which measures will have the most impact on lowering those high heating bills.

**Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009 - 7 pm**

*these HouseMender University sessions will be  
held at*

**Cleveland Heights - University Heights  
Public Library  
2345 Lee Road**

Reservations requested –  
call (216) 381-9560

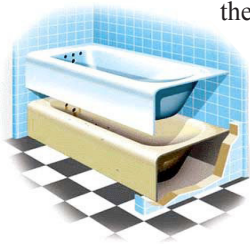


**HOME  
REPAIR  
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## “Refreshing” old bathtubs

At Home Repair Resource Center, we get lots of questions about what can be done to improve the looks of an older bathtub – usually, one that has suffered problems from years of use and abuse. The most common source of porcelain damage is a long-running faucet leak that has eroded the finish away and exposed the iron underneath. Another culprit is the use of high-abrasive cleansers, like Comet™, that has literally washed the finish down the drain. If you have one of those scarred-up, rusty bathtubs, there are several ways to improve its appearance.



Your first option is to replace the tub outright. That may mean tearing open the walls in order to get the old one out, and then adapting the walls for the new bathtub.

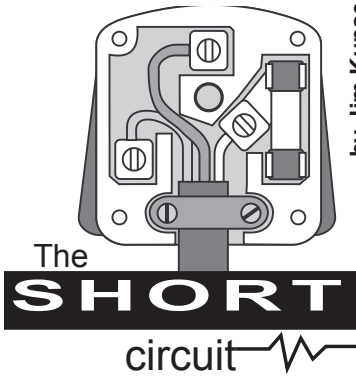
(Most newer tubs are shorter and shallower than the older “expansive” models.) This is a lot of work, and takes quite a bit of time. Moreover, the cost can be anywhere from \$1,600 to \$5,000, depending on whether you get porcelain-enameled steel (the least expensive material), fiberglass or plastic, or porcelain-enameled cast iron (the most expensive choice).

An alternative you might consider is to have the tub cleaned, acid-etched and recoated with a urethane resin paint. For this job, it’s generally advisable to hire a professional refinisher, who will fill in any pitted or chipped areas before applying the finish and then power-buff the finish so that it shines like a new tub. The tub will be ready for use in 24 hours, and you’ll pay far less than the cost of a new bathtub. If you don’t clean the tub with an abrasive cleanser or with bleach, the finish will last 15 years or more.

The most common source of porcelain damage is a long-running faucet leak that has eroded the finish. Another culprit is the use of high-abrasive cleansers, like Comet™.

A third option is to hire a company (i.e., ReBath™) that specializes in molding a vinyl liner to fit over your old tub. These companies usually have a variety of old tubs at their facility to use as mold forms. The job can be done in a day; the installers remove the drain covers, glue the liner in place, replace the drain covers, and caulk the joint where the liner meets the wall. Lining a tub costs more than recoating it, but less than the cost of a new fixture.

Regardless of whether you replace your tub or preserve the existing fixture with one of these alternative methods, the new surface will have a longer life if you treat it gently.



by Jim Kunselman

In the course of my work, I am in a lot of houses. I've seen some poor housekeeping, more than one wiring problem, and some really serious things that would ordinarily cause a building to be condemned. But in households with small children, what especially scares me are non-functioning smoke detectors. The most common problem seems to be dead or missing batteries.

According to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) research, more than half of all residential fire fatalities occur at night while people are sleeping. Smoke detectors cut the risk of fatalities in a home

fire almost in half - *but only if they are working*. Check your smoke detectors monthly by pushing the test button. The only real maintenance needed to keep a smoke detector in proper working order is to install new batteries twice a year. (Many folks put in new batteries when they change their clocks for Daylight Savings Time.) While you have the cover open, give the smoke detector a quick vacuuming to finish the job.



### Placing Smoke Detectors:

To ensure that a smoke detector will work as it was designed, read the manufacturer's instructions for installation. Usually, the proper placement is on the ceiling. However, if a wall is to be used, install the smoke detector(s) at a distance of 4" to 6" from the ceiling.

You should install a smoke detector on every level of your home, including the basement and attic. Install one smoke detector outside each sleeping area in your home. Place them away from the kitchen, so you won't have nuisance alarms caused by cooking vapors. Smoke detectors should be replaced every five to ten years.



### Besides Installing Smoke Detectors:

Create a plan for when an alarm sounds. Because every second is critical, you should make sure your family has an escape plan - and practices it. Remember to stay low as you move, so you will be under the smoke where the air is fresher, cooler, and easier to breathe.

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# The Short Circuit

*continued from page 10*

These are the essentials of a good plan:

- Plan two ways out of every room.
- Make sure you can open doors and windows in every room.
- Designate a family meeting place outside the home.
- Once outside, call 911. Do not re-enter the home.



According to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) research, more than half of all residential fire fatalities occur at night while people are sleeping. Smoke detectors cut the risk of fatalities in a home fire almost in half - *but only if they are working.*

Operation Save-a-Life, a program of the American Red Cross and the Cleveland Heights Fire Division, provides FREE smoke alarms and batteries to Cleveland Heights residents. Smoke alarms are distributed by Cleveland Heights firefighters at no cost to residents. To apply for a free smoke alarm (verification of residency required), visit the Fire Chief's Office, located at Cleveland Heights City Hall, 40 Severance Circle.

## Attention Senior Homeowners!

In the current economic climate, Home Repair Resource Center recognizes that seniors may have special difficulties in keeping their homes in good repair. To help address these problems, HRRC has added some exciting new benefits for Cleveland Heights homeowners age 62 and older:

- \$1500 grant towards the cost of replacing a roof or furnace (income guidelines apply). This grant must be used with one of HRRC's 0% loan programs, and will reduce the amount that must be borrowed - and the monthly payment!
- Special classes for all senior homeowners on correcting violations, protecting yourself when contracting, and other topics of interest. Watch upcoming issues of this newsletter for further information.

In addition, HRRC invites seniors to look through the contractor evaluations in our Resource Library to identify people who do good quality work, and to make an appointment to review bids and clarify any questions about what is being proposed.

For further information, call Allison at 381-6100.



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