

The Home Improvement Corner

I want to bring to your attention that I have heard from several people in the community about issues with garage ceilings and Bedroom ceilings. One person wrote that it was pointed out to them that thinner nails were used when these homes were built and they just weren't able to hold for this many years... We personally live in the Aspen in Sec 3 and have not had any issues, YET...but I am going to have it looked at...I know there are people who have more items stored in the attic than others, but I think whether you use it for storage or not, it is a good idea to have it looked at and of course you don't want to be having sweet dreams in your bed when your ceiling comes down on you...Now, I will also point out from experience as a Realtor and seeing many situations in Home Inspections etc...If you have someone in and he tells you that you have an issue, please get the information and then go get another opinion...Something this serious, you really want to make sure you have it seen by more than one person and pretty much they both have the same bottom line. I will be doing more checking to find a couple more contractor names for our list...Right now the name of Alfonso Aguilar 703-866-2420 is one who has worked on a couple of these ceiling issues reinforcing the ceilings with wood screws that are longer and wider than nails. One suggestion is, get on a stool and see if you can push up on your ceiling--if there is any movement, best get it checked sooner than later. If anyone has had similar issues, please let me know and I will pass it on...some of you would rather not have your names/addresses posted and I certainly respect that wish.

Should You DIY or Pay The Expert?

By Blanche Evans

When you watch home improvement shows, the professionals make it look so easy to tear out a wall, replace a roof, or set new tile in the bath. Yes, you save a lot of money when you do-it-yourself (DIY), but in some situations, you're better off paying the expert (PTE). According to Angie Hicks, founder of Angie's List, some jobs aren't as simple or as safe to do as they look. In a recent interview, Hicks pointed out that some DIY jobs end in disaster. More than 136,000 DIY injuries require medical attention annually. As many as 35,000 injuries were from nail guns. Forbes Magazine reports that workshop injuries are even higher - 400,000 annually. Most injuries are caused by "pilot error" -- an operator who fails to respect safety rules. Wear goggles, use clamps where needed, check electrical cords for fraying, and keep your tools clean and sharp. Be sure to always use the correct tool for the job. And let's not forget errors of judgment. Don't work while you're tired, or under the influence of a drug or alcohol. And definitely don't tackle a job beyond your knowledge.

- Before you begin a DIY project, Angie recommends that you ask yourself three questions:
 - Do you have the right training and experience, Do you have the time to do the job right, and Do you have the correct tools?

Among Angie's List members polled about DIY mistakes, 30% of respondents said that they saved money, but 10% said they were injured on the project, such as falling off a ladder. Sometimes, there are so many issues and costs to do a job, that you might be better off hiring a contractor. Let's say you want to paint a room. You're willing to give up a weekend. First you measure your room so you'll know how much paint to buy. Do you know what kind of paint to buy, and will one coat cover the color you're painting over? And what about the trim? Latex or oil-base? There's also painter's tape, plastic for the furniture, brushes and rollers, sandpaper, and other supplies. When you total all that, you might be better off hiring a painting contractor. You'll be paying retail, while a professional painter gets the same items wholesale. If you do want to DIY, Angie recommends starting with a small job, like replacing kitchen drawer knobs and stay away from jobs that require a license, such as those held by electricians or plumbers. Home improvement expert Don Vanderwort suggests you should avoid doing jobs yourself that may be "dangerous, particularly difficult, or where a mistake can be quite costly. Some jobs simply are not worth the risk." Think twice before attempting roofing, removing or pouring concrete, siding work requiring scaffolding higher than two stories, or work where there may be "hidden mysteries". The bottom line is you want a professional-looking result. If you don't think you can do the job well, it's time to hire the expert.