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TODAY'S PROMPT PAYMENT,
BUILDS TOMORROW'S CREDIT!

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Happy 4th of July

July Newsletter

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Maintenance Tip of the Month:

If you have a water pipe or faucet leaking, please don't put off fixing it. The long term damage created by running water is much more difficult to live with—it creates MOLD!!!

SMOKE ALARM ALERT!!!

Last year a father and two children were killed in their home as result of a house fire.

The Fire Department determined that the family's smoke alarm batteries had been **disconnected!**

Smoke alarms can save lives.

Please double check that your smoke detectors **and** your carbon monoxide detectors are working.

Notify our maintenance coordinator, **John Williford at 776-2643** immediately if you are having any problems with your detectors!

Thank you,
HRE, Inc.

Simple Energy Saving Tips

As energy prices soar, homeowners are looking for ways to improve energy efficiency. These improvements will not only help your home stay cooler in the summer, but they will also allow your home to hold heat during the winter. The CertainTeed Home Institute offers these tips:

- Upgrade your attic insulation. This is especially important if your home was built before 1980 because the recommended levels have been raised since that time. Also, check that the insulation around windows and doors is sufficient. This can either be done
- yourself or with the help of a contractor.
- Strategically plant trees and shrubs to reduce heat exposure. Low-lying evergreens planted close to the foundation of your home can help slow the escape of cool air during the summer and insulate during the winter.
- Have your cooling and heating units serviced regularly to ensure that they are working efficiently. Also, be sure to change the filter regularly!
- Weather-strip, caulk and seal around all windows, doors, electrical

boxes, and plumbing penetrations. Check if roof eaves and/or siding are airtight.

- Close the east/west facing blinds and curtains during the day to minimize heat gain. Also, close the vents in the guestroom and other infrequently used rooms to allow the flow of air to concentrate on the frequently used rooms.
- Install an automatic programmable thermostat. It will help control your home's temperature around your living schedule.

Some Information can show up on your credit report FOREVER!

Q: How long can information show up on my credit report? There are things on my credit report that I think are too old to still be there.

A: Most information can show up on credit report for seven years. Bankruptcies can be reported for 10 years. Some things can be reported forever. And for some purposes, anything can reported forever.

The law that applies is the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act. Since 1971, the FCRA has governed how credit reporting agencies handle information about consumers. A "credit reporting agency" is "any person which ... regularly engages ...

in the practice of assembling or evaluating consumer credit information or other information on consumers for the purpose of furnishing consumer reports to third parties."

In general, the FCRA prohibits the reporting of "adverse information" that "antedates the report by more than seven years."

For unpaid debts, that seven years starts running from the date of the last regularly scheduled payment before the debt became delinquent. On law-

suits, it's seven years from the date they're filed. On judgments, it's seven years from the date the judgment is entered.

Paying a judgment doesn't remove it from your credit report. It can stay there for that seven years from entry.

A paid tax lien on real estate can be reported for seven years from the date of payment.

Bankruptcies have a longer time limit. They can show on credit reports for 10 years from when the bankruptcy discharge is entered.

Two things – criminal convictions and certain student loans – have no time limit and therefore can show up on your credit report forever. Perkins Loans and National Direct Student Loans are the kinds that last forever. Those loans are originally made directly by the school, but are paid off by the government if the student defaults.

Adverse information about other types of student loans – ones made by lenders – can be reported for seven years. But there are a variety of events that can trigger that seven years, so a short explanation of how to meas-

ure the seven years on student loans isn't possible here.

The above time limits are determined by what's being reported. In three situations, though, the time limits are determined by what the information is being reported for. In those situations, there's no time limit on anything. Everything can be reported forever.

Those three situations are big loans, life insurance policies and salaries. If a credit report is used for a loan or a life insurance policy of at least \$150,000, or a job with an annual salary of \$75,000, there are no time limits at all. Anything can be reported, forever. Credit reporting agencies don't have to report everything forever in those situations, but they can.

If adverse information shows up on credit reports in violation of the FCRA's time limits, you can sue for actual damages. If a violation is willful, you can get up to \$1,000 in statutory and punitive damages. If you sue and win, the other side has to pay you attorney fees

Use Caulk to seal up a drafty House.

Q: It seems to be drafty in my home whenever it is windy outdoors. I have noticed some caulk around the windows is dry and hard. Where should I check for areas to caulk and what is the best caulk to use?

A: If the caulk feels dry and hard, it is probably time to replace it with new caulk. Even though you may not see noticeable cracks and gaps, the caulk is probably not adhering well. If you dig in it with the tip of a screwdriver, pieces may fall out.

One simple method is to find areas that need to be caulked is to hold the back of your hand near windows and doors on windy days. You will be able to feel serious air leaks. Also, move a lighted stick of incense around all the windows and doors and observe the trail of smoke.

Windows and doors are the obvious locations for air leakages, but they are not always the worst culprits. The sill area, where the walls rest on the

foundation, is often the area of greatest air leakage.

Check for gaps around the wiring where the main electrical service enters your home. Do the same where the telephone and cable lines come indoors. Holes for outdoor faucets are often bigger than the diameter of the pipe.

Inspect any penetrations in the ceilings for recessed lights, vent fans, ceiling fans, etc. You will probably have to get up into your attic and move some insulation away to check these. While you are up there, also check for gaps where the plumbing vent pipes pass through the attic floor.

Since the old caulk is hard and brittle, it probably was not silicone so a caulk remover (softener)chemical should make it easier to remove the old caulk. These chemical removers are not as effective on silicone.

For indoors, with its small temperature changes, latex caulk is effective. It lasts

about 20 years and is paintable. Instead of painting it, kits are also available to mix paint with the caulk to tint it for a perfect match.

The most common caulk used is acrylic latex with silicone. It costs about a dollar more per tube than plain acrylic latex, but it lasts years longer and is more durable. It also is more durable. It also is paintable and cleans up with soap and water.

Silicone caulk is best where flexibility is required, often outdoors.

Not all silicone is paintable, so it is available in several colors. It is more difficult to lay a smooth bead with silicone, it has an odor as it cures and cleanup is more difficult.

For large gaps, expandable urethane foam is a good choice. It also adds insulation value. It is available in low and high expansion formulas.

The low-expansion type is better for most applications

Carbon monoxide detectors

Q: I have thought about installing a carbon monoxide (CO₂) detector in our utility room. Is it really necessary to use one during the summer when our gas furnace is not being used?

A: It is true there are far fewer carbon monoxide-related health issues during the summer, but you should still use one year-round. When air conditioning, the house is as airtight as during the winter.

If you have a gas furnace, you probably also have a gas water heater which is used year-round and actually more often during the summer. The only cost to operate a CO detector is a battery, so to be safe, keep it operational year-round.