

## Home Improvement Projects Can Go Up in Smoke

It's not hard to find home improvement tips. Renovations are big business, and it's hard to turn on the television, visit a hardware store or open your Internet home page without being bombarded by home improvement advice. Unfortunately, the most important home improvement tips are those that are rarely, if ever, shared.

Every year, many property owners lose their investments to fire. Accidents can happen in the blink of an eye, but there are steps you can take to prevent your home improvement projects from going up in smoke.

Hot, dry weather will exponentially increase the amount of damage done in the event of an accidental fire. Dry weeds and vegetation around the property are definitely fuel for fire. Just one lightning bolt, carelessly tossed cigarette or ember from a barbecue or fire can cause a blaze with the power to destroy your home, and those of your neighbors. Some homes are spared from the devastation, while others burn to the ground. The difference in your home being immune, or being a blazing ember, is in the additional preventative steps that were taken during construction and in basic property management.

These are the important home improvement tips that every property owner needs to know:

### Preventing or Saving Your Home From Fire

Any and all natural elements that can lead to fire should be removed from the perimeter of your home. Take a walk around your property and remove any sources of potential fuel for fire. Trees and plants that have a lot of dry leaves are very prone to starting or contributing to dangerous fires. Water your lawn and gardens regularly. Keep your trees well pruned, and avoid planting them in clusters. Remove any dried, flammable vegetation that is found within thirty feet of your home. It's even wiser to thin out the dry plant material within one hundred feet of all the structures on your property.

Branches on trees less than six feet in height should be pruned with pruning shears. In the event of a fire, low-lying branches can burn and spread the flames. This is an important home improvement tip that you likely won't hear about on the television or Internet.

Another useful home improvement tip is to avoid stacking wood next to your house. Woodpiles should be located at least thirty feet from any structures or buildings. Try to avoid placing piles of lumber and other construction materials near your home, and keep any butane or propane tanks at least ten feet away from your home or dry materials.

### Fireproof Your Home

Every property owner must know how to prepare the building for a fire. When buying siding and roofing materials, choose those that are flame retardant or at least flame resistant. Asphalt-fiberglass or masonry roofing shingles are good choices for those who live in areas prone to fire.

Give consideration to fireproofing the interior of your home as well. In seconds, a regular living room curtain can turn into a blazing inferno. Choose draperies made of fire-resistant materials. Install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers at key points in the home, and check them regularly to be sure they're fully charged.

The most important tip of all is to talk to your family about fire. Make sure that everyone in the family, particularly children, knows what to do in the event of fire. Devise a fire escape plan, and practice it with family fire drills.

Your home improvement projects can go up in smoke, and while these may not be the most popular home improvement tips, they can save your investment or even your life. Be a safe and sensible homeowner. Everyone around you is depending on it.