

Stock up on safety gear before your next DIY project



Do-it-yourself, or DIY, projects around the house can give homeowners a more personal stake in their properties. Getting their own hands dirty when renovating a bathroom rather than paying a professional to do all that work gives many homeowners a strong sense of accomplishment while allowing them to learn a few things and save some money along the way.

But whether homeowners have years of experience with regard to renovations or are about to embark on their first DIY

adventure, safety should be a top priority. Securing the right safety equipment might not guarantee a DIY project comes out looking exactly as homeowners hope, but it can help protect DIYers and their helpers from suffering injuries as they renovate their homes. The following is a list of some safety equipment all homeowners should have at the ready before beginning home improvement projects.

- First-aid kit: All homes should have a first-aid kit on hand, regardless of whether any renovations

are in the offing. First-aid kits can help treat minor cuts and scrapes, but such kits also can be used to prevent more serious injuries from escalating in the time it takes to see a physician. When tackling a large DIY project, secure a well-stocked first-aid kit that includes more than just band-aids and adhesives. In addition to such items, a reliable first-aid kit should include antiseptic ointment, a chemical cold pack, cotton balls, eyedrops, first-aid tape, needles, sterile gauze bandages, and tweezers. In addition, make sure the kit includes a first-aid handbook that contains instructions regarding the treatment of common injuries.

- Eyewear: Protective eyewear is essential when working on renovation projects. Safety goggles may suffice on smaller projects, but make sure the goggles fit well, as loose goggles will still allow debris into your eyes, and that debris can compromise your vision and result in injuries to your eyes. If you will be welding, be sure to wear proper welding goggles with adequate lens shading.

- Mask/respirator: Home renovation projects, especially those that involve taking down walls, can leave DIYers' lungs susceptible to lung irritation and disease. But masks and respirators can protect the lungs. Cloth masks may be sufficient for smaller

projects, while more significant undertakings may require the use of dual-cartridge respirators that provide added protection for sensitive lungs.

- Gloves: Hands also can take a beating during home improvement projects, so it's important that DIYers find sturdy gloves to wear throughout their renovation efforts. While this may contradict the idea of getting your hands dirty, splintered, blistered hands are painful and susceptible to infection. Wear sturdy rubber gloves when using chemical cleaners or any products containing acid.

- Joint supports: Achy joints can make it difficult to effectively tackle DIY projects, so it's important that you support your joints from start to finish. Knee and elbow pads can protect your joints as you spend time on your knees or crawling around while working on projects close to the ground.

- Back support: Many DIY projects involve lifting and transporting heavy objects, and men and women unused to such lifting can quickly suffer an injury if they are not adequately supporting their backs. Wear a back brace and/or weight belt when lifting or moving heavy objects, and don't be afraid to ask for assistance if you find an object is too heavy to move on your own.

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*Improvements

continued from page 14



project on this year's report is the installation of manufactured stone veneer on home exteriors. This category zoomed to the top of the midrange list, grabbing second place with a 92.2 percent cost-value return. Increased product demand for Heritage Stone is a reflection of this trend, observed by Wengert and others.

- Garage Door Replacement: The installation of new four-section garage doors on galvanized steel tracks proved to be a valuable project with homeowners recouping 88.4 percent of their costs.

- Vinyl Siding Replacement: Replacing a home's vinyl siding was one of a handful of projects that jumped up the list for recouping improvement costs. So not

only can new vinyl siding beautify a home, it can keep it weatherproof and enhance its resale value.

- Deck Addition: Adding a wooden deck can do more than provide a place to enjoy the great outdoors. When it comes time to sell, you should be able to pocket more than 80 percent of the cost for this improvement.

More resources on home improvement projects, along with information on entry doors, vinyl siding and manufactured stone veneer, can be found at www.proviaproducts.com/cvv.

Before you dip into your wallet, learn which home improvements will best hold their value while enhancing curb appeal.

Disaster-resilient homes start with concrete walls

A home today must be more than just aesthetically pleasing. The costs of fuel consumption and extreme-storm damage, plus costs in the way of carbon footprints, are making all of us insist on far more property benefits, including superior durability and resilience from pending disasters.

"In that case, open the door to a home built with concrete reinforced walls, instead of wood, and see how you will receive greater safety, comfort, investment value, and energy efficiency," says Todd Blyth at Nudura, a leading name in building technology.

"Concrete is a major solution for weather extremes, and for more than a decade now, the building system using ICFs (insulated concrete forms) has proven to deliver the most durable building frame."

The ICF principle is simple, Blyth says.

The walls are constructed with pre-assembled, interlocking units (similar to Lego), so they're easily transported to any building site. Each form consists of two panels of thick foam (expanded polystyrene) connected with a patented web system. Guided by the architectural design and beauty aspects you request, the ICFs are stacked, steel reinforced, and filled with concrete until the entire building envelope is complete.

Here's a snapshot of additional building benefits:

Disaster-resilient: ICF walls withstand winds of up to 402 kilometers per hour and give you a fire protection rating as long as four hours.

Energy efficiency: Premium insulation delivers an energy-efficiency rating as high as R-50 due to the thermal mass of the concrete (compared to an average R-20 in wood structures), and that equates to reducing household energy bills by as much as 70 percent. And if optional inserts are added to the ICF forms, this efficiency is improved even more.

Occupant comfort: Outside cold can easily travel through the typical wood-framed wall, causing uneven temperatures inside your home. However, the monolithic ICF wall eliminates drafts and cold spots and it is an

effective sound barrier, filtering out unwanted noise.

Green living: Concrete is a sustainable material; trees are not needed; the system uses only recycled polymers and steel; the building process creates less waste than traditional methods; and the occupants use fewer fossil fuels for a much smaller carbon footprint.

Short- and long-term value: A concrete home is built to last and retain its value longer. In the short-term, the superior durability of

concrete walls require less maintenance, repair and money to maintain than wood structures.

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