

Tips for preventing winter allergies

(ARA) - Spring and fall are the most notorious allergy seasons, but as any of the estimated 50 million Americans who suffer from allergies know, winter can be just as uncomfortable. As we move our lives back indoors, we often seal up our homes to prevent the cold from seeping in. While that's good for energy bills and staying warm, if you don't take some precautions, it can cause problems for those with indoor allergies.

To make sure that your home is a healthy one throughout the season, start taking action against allergens as you winterize your house. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), some of the most common indoor allergens are mold spores, dust mites and pet dander - so pay special attention to preventing those. As the weeks pass, keep to a schedule of cleaning that will maintain a lower level of allergens. Here are some tips to help you make your home a haven where allergy sufferers will feel comfortable.

*** Don't let towels pile up.** Whether in the kitchen or the bathroom, it's important that damp towels aren't left to sit in a pile. The moisture they retain can create perfect conditions for growing mold or provide an

ideal home for mites. Hang towels so that they can dry fully and launder them in your washing machine at least once a week to get rid of mold spores.

*** Stop the fur from flying.** AAFA notes that cat dander is the most common pet allergy. But whether you have a dog, cat or other furry critter, they can cause discomfort for any members of your household with allergies, as well for any guests who come to town for holiday celebrations. To cut down on allergens from both dander and saliva, be sure to wash your pets' toys and beds regularly. Vacuuming up pet hair is also an essential step. A vacuum cleaner like LG's LuV300B Kompressor is a good option because its HEPA filter captures 99.97 percent of common household allergens. It has also been certified "asthma & allergy friendly" by AAFA. Giving your pets regular baths and brushings can also help to cut down on the amount of hair and dander that they shed.

*** Make your bed and sleep in it.** If your sleep is being disrupted by allergy symptoms, you need to make sure that your bedding isn't part of the problem. Mite-proof bedding and mattress or pillow cases can help cut allergens, but you

should also remember that washing, cleaning and replacement are important. Some washing machines from LG feature the Allergiene cycle, a specialized steam cycle that helps to kill dust mites and their eggs; it's the only such cycle that has also been certified by AAFA. While you're washing your sheets and comforters, take time to vacuum your mattress with a HEPA-filter equipped vacuum. Pillows should be replaced every two years and it's suggested that mattresses be replaced every 10 years.

*** Don't forget decor.** Vacuuming your floors is a given, but to really make an impact on the allergens in your home, you need to pay attention the rest of your decor as well. Area rugs in the living room or bedrooms, as well as kitchen and bath floor mats need to be vacuumed often and, if possible, laundered regularly. Cleaning the upholstery on your couches and chairs is another essential step - pet hair and dust mites can settle there and irritate people with allergies. Large capacity washing machines that are certified "asthma & allergy friendly" are ideal for large items like throw rugs and slip covers from your couch or easy chair. If they can't go in the



PHOTO COURTESY ARA CONTENT

How to choose a home fire sprinkler system

(ARA) - Most people have never stopped to consider the various options available for home fire sprinkler systems. That's because, until now, most homes were not protected by a residential sprinkler system.

In response to growing concerns about fatalities caused by household fires, as well as enhanced education regarding the effectiveness of fire sprinkler systems, building codes are changing to prompt an increase in the number of homes having sprinklers. January 2011 is when the new code takes effect requiring that single-family homes constructed after that time contain sprinklers (although each state has the option to adopt the code on its own timeline).

As a result, homeowners who never gave a second thought to fire sprinklers are now faced with critical decisions.

"It's important to realize that not all fire sprinkler systems are the same," says Matthew Kuwath of BlazeMaster Fire Sprinkler Systems. "Although the general operation of a sprinkler head being activated by the presence of a fire is similar, the overall performance and capabilities of the material in the system vary greatly. That's why it's important to take the time to research all options in order to

choose the right solution for your family."

Decisions need to be made relative to both the design of the system, as well as the piping material. A vast majority of homes today have what is called a stand-alone system. This means the fire sprinkler system operates independently of the home's plumbing system. The other design option for homeowners is a multipurpose system which, as the name implies, combines the fire sprinkler and plumbing systems.

Another important decision is the selection of the material used for the pipe and fittings in the system. For residential fire sprinkler systems, four materials are approved for use - steel, copper, CPVC and PEX. Historically, steel and copper systems were installed. But escalating material costs and problems with corrosion have opened the door for newer, more reliable technologies.

Chlorinated polyvinyl chloride, better known as CPVC, which has been used successfully in fire protection applications under the BlazeMaster brand name for more than 25 years, is the most specified non-metallic fire sprinkler piping material in the world today. Compared to metallic systems, it offers a number of benefits, including immunity to corrosion, ease of

installation and reduced costs.

If you are getting ready to build a new home, chances are that you have spent considerable time comparing your options for aesthetic items such as cabinets, carpeting and lighting fixtures. Choosing the right fire sprinkler system deserves at least the same amount of deliberation and shopping for the sake of your family's safety. To learn more about your options, visit www.blazemaster.com or www.homefiresprinkler.org.



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