

### Safety tips for rural homeowners

If you're a rural homeowner who maintains a few acres beyond city limits, there are important safety tips that can make your use of electricity safer and more efficient. While electricity is one of the safest forms of energy, the absence of electrical codes and inspections in rural areas means that homeowners must take greater responsibility for recognizing unsafe wiring and other hazardous conditions. Here are a few guidelines that can save lives, property and money:

#### Use Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI)

Use wherever electricity, water and you come together. GFCIs are electrical protection devices that sense a ground-fault or short, and instantly disconnect the circuit. Unlike fuses and circuit breakers that depend on heavy overloads or shorts to function, GFCIs sense even small electrical faults and disconnect the circuit before anyone is injured. This is particularly important for outdoor and farmstead electric use in operating power tools, lawn trimmers, hedge clippers, power spray washers, and all electric use around swimming pools and hot tubs. Some GFCIs are designed to replace standard outlets; other portable units simply plug into existing outlets and can be moved from one location to another. For new homes and additions, the National Electrical Code requires the use of GFCIs in garages, bathrooms, and on outdoor receptacles.

### Air leaks can be plugged

When this winter's high heating bills hit home, you may be surprised to know that cold air may be leaking in (or warm air out) through a hole in your wall as large as a medium-size TV screen.

That mysterious hole adds up from all the cracks that may exist around the frames of your old windows. For example, a one-sixteenth inch wide crack around a standard 3-foot by 5-foot window adds up to 12 square inches (a hole about the size of a brick) for each window. If you have, say, 15 such windows in your home, there's your TV-size hole.

Air leakage around the perimeter of windows and doors is known as "infiltration," and it can add a significant spin to your utility meter. Caulking can help, but if your windows are too old, warped or loose-fitting, replacing them with new, thermally-efficient aluminum windows

### Regular furnace maintenance recommended

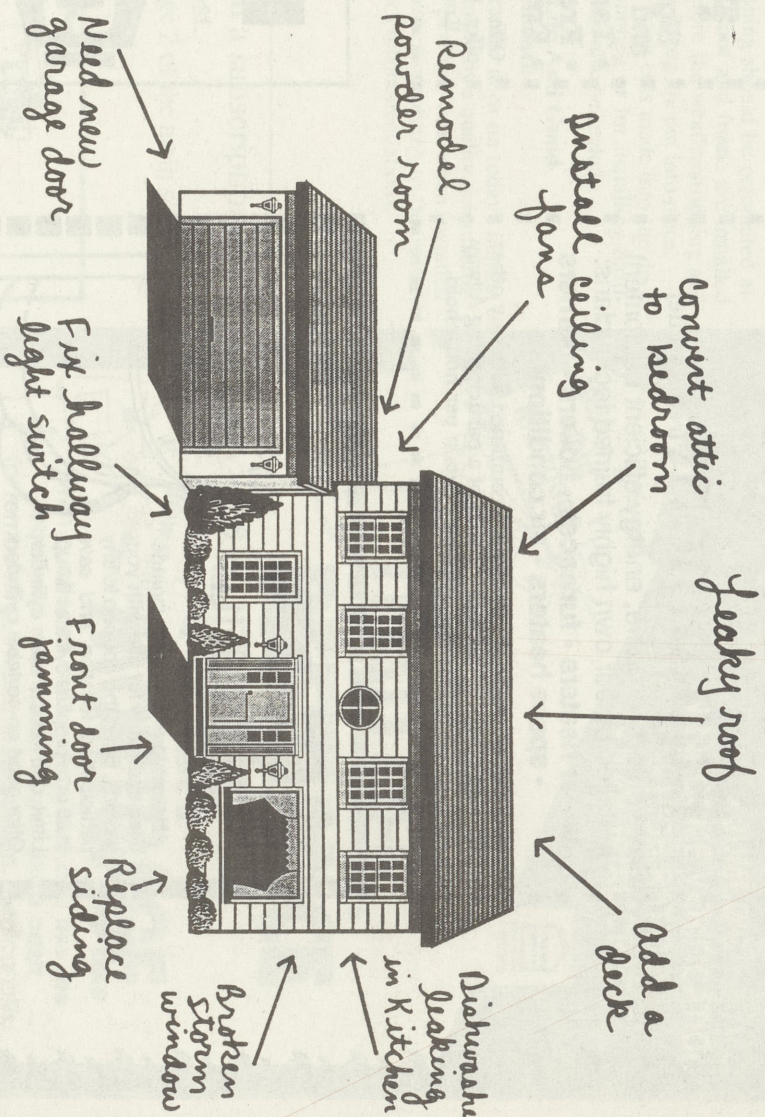
Modern furnaces are complex, high-tech appliances and should be inspected and serviced periodically by a professional heating contractor in order to ensure safe and efficient operation. This maintenance is recommended whether the furnace is fueled by natural gas, propane or oil, according to the American Gas Association.

- The start of the heating season is the best time to have a furnace inspected and maintained. Heating contractors should follow the manufacturer's maintenance guidelines for each unit in accordance with local building codes and regulations. A.C.G.A. says:
- There are a number of steps that should be included in most periodic inspection and maintenance procedures:
- Inspect the furnace vent system.
- Remove any leaves, nests or other obstructions from inside chimney.
- Replace or clean air filter as required.
- Properly lubricate blower motor, fan and other appropriate parts.
- Replace frayed blower belts.
- Clean pilots and burner chamber.

- Remove dust or lint from furnace vents, registers and baseboard heaters, and;
- Clean and adjust thermostats.

In addition, qualified contractors should check to see that all flue connections and elbows are firmly fitted. There should not be any cracks or openings at the point where the flue pipe enters a chimney. Large amounts of rust may indicate excessive condensation inside the flue, which can be a sign of improper installation.

## The First Name In New Home Construction Is Also The First Name In Home Improvement



- ADDITIONS
- REMODELING
- RENOVATIONS

RUCKNO CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

Corner of Murray & Dilley Sts. Forty-Fort, PA • 287-2194



### ASHI warns home buyers to look before they leap

The price of the American dream—and the cost of financing it—have literally gone through the roof in recent years. Whether mortgage rates are up or down, the purchase of a home still represents the largest investment most families ever make in a lifetime.

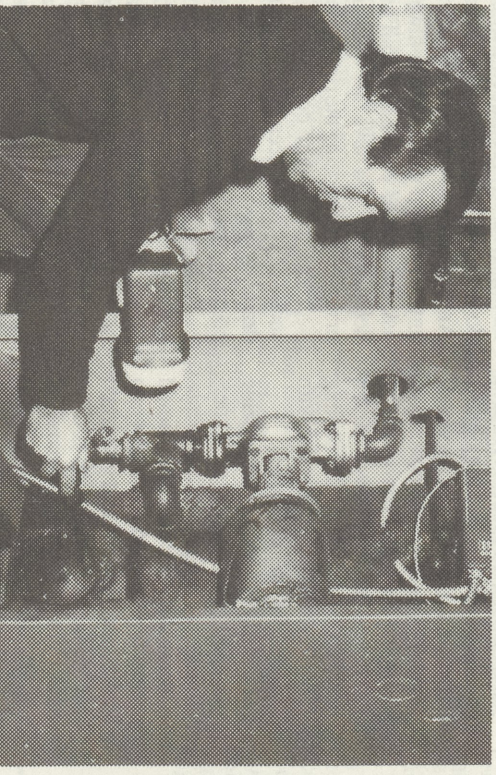
The American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), the first nationwide organization of professional home inspectors, warns home buyers to fight the temptation to jump quickly at what may first appear to be a good deal.

Most houses up for sale today, both old and new, have some defects or repair needs, many of them serious. In these cases, any savings achieved through lower mortgage rates or purchase prices can easily get eaten up by unanticipated repair costs after the family moves in.

Many defects often go totally unnoticed by the average person, but can be quickly and accurately identified by a qualified home inspector. The smart consumer, therefore, will take the time to call in and accompany a professional home inspector for a thorough and impartial inspection of the condition of the house before making a final decision.

The members of ASHI recommend that even before the official inspection, home buyers can run some checks of their own that will tell them a great deal about the shape a given home is in when they first see it, and before they start falling in love with it.

- #### Outdoors
1. Take note of the overall impression. Is the house well kept? Does the roof sag? Are the exterior walls straight or out of line? What is the condition of the paint, especially on the south and west sides, where sun exposure is greatest? Is the ground sloped away from the house for adequate drainage?
  2. Observe the condition of the roof. Are shingles curling and lifting? Find out how old the roof is, and you will have a pretty good idea of when you will have to replace it. A tar and gravel roof should last up to 15 years, asphalt shingle 15 to 20, wood shingles 15 to 20, and



wood shakes about 20 to 25 years. These estimates may vary depending upon the region of the country.

3. Look closely at window and door frames. Has the glazing putty dried and shrunk, allowing water and air seepage? Is the wood decayed? Are the window and door frames all caulked? Weather-stripped?
4. Check pavements, driveways and horizontal brick surfaces. Have all cracks been filled? Is there damage from freezing? What is the condition of the mortar in between bricks? Is any pavement buckling from spreading underground tree roots?

- #### Indoors
5. Look at the attic and crawl space insulation. Is it adequate? Is it complete? Has it been properly installed? Does it cover up the air vents, preventing the house from "breathing" and possibly causing wood rot?
  6. Test the plumbing. Turn on the bathroom sink faucet and the shower and then flush the toilet. When the toilet starts to refill, does the water pressure diminish markedly? Fill sinks and tub with three inches of water. Do they drain properly? Do faucets leak? Lift up any carpeting. Are there any signs of flooding or decay?
  7. Look over the interior. Are there signs of leaks, such as water stains? Is plaster badly cracked? Are walls and ceilings straight and level? A newly painted interior may look nice, but it could be hiding something. Do doors and windows open easily?
  8. Open the cabinet doors to the fuse boxes or circuit breakers. BUT DON'T REMOVE THE PANEL COVER. The average house requires 100 amp service at both 110 and 220 volts. Is it labeled as such? This is no guarantee of safety or adequacy, however, and is something only a professional home inspector or licensed electrician can check.
  9. Check the oil/gas/electric heating equipment. How old is it? Has it

been maintained? Ask to see the owner's heating bills from a previous year. This will give you an idea of the efficiency of the system as well as the effectiveness of any insulation.

10. Look for evidence of termites on basement wood structure. Is there wood or paper debris? Do you see termite tubes or tunnels? Termites travel to and from the earth, so make sure that there are no places where earth is closer than six inches to wood.

These are only preliminary guide-

lines. If buyers find a number of faults themselves, they can be sure it reflects the overall condition of the house. If no major problems are apparent, the expert eye of a professional inspector will yield a more accurate total picture.

Finding faults in a home doesn't necessarily mean one shouldn't buy it, only that the consumer can know in advance the type of repair costs to anticipate. Often sellers will negotiate the purchase price on the basis of major problems discovered in an inspection. If the inspector finds very little in need of repair, then the peace of mind in making an informed purchasing decision can be just as important as avoiding a potential nightmare.

## FREE WEATHERIZATION For Your Home!



How to Apply...It takes only a minute. Fill out the information below, and mail to: UGI Electric Service, Weatherization Dept., 247 Wyoming Ave., Kingston, PA 18704-9985. UGI will have a representative contact you.

**Yes, I want FREE WEATHERIZATION!** Please have your representative contact me.

- (Please check boxes that apply)
- I am a UGI Electric Service customer
- I have electric heat
- I own home
- I rent home/cpt.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Other phone \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to call \_\_\_\_\_ Customer # \_\_\_\_\_



247 WYOMING AVENUE  
KINGSTON, PA 18704  
(717) 283-0611 or  
1-800-962-1212