

# HOMESENSE

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Your Home's Hidden Dangers  
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Smart and simple ways to enrich your home living

Fall 2010

\$3.00

## SEASONAL SHIFT

### Seasonal Changes, Inside and Out

Nature has ways of letting you know what's going on. Like with the change from Summer to Fall, the signs are there. The leaves on the trees lose their Summer green, leaving behind the red, yellow, orange and brown that you think of as the Fall landscape. The days get shorter, and they get a good bit cooler too.

Your home also has ways of letting you know what's going on. Energy efficiency is a particularly "hot topic" for cold weather, so use these points as guides to making your home more energy-efficient.

- **Last Chance for "Economic Stimulus" Cash!** You've only got until December 31 to turn in your old energy-gobbling heat pump for a more energy-efficient model and get a 30% tax credit up to \$1,500 on this year's taxes. So, if you're ready to upgrade the comfort system in your primary residence, this could be the best time ever.
- **Lowering thermostats can lower energy bills.** Studies show that for every degree you lower the

temperature on your thermostat, you can save 2% on your heating bill. Keep your thermostat set to 68 degrees when you're at home or lower when you're asleep or away. A programmable thermostat can adjust these settings for you.

- **Reducing air leaks also reduces energy use.** Windows and doors should be sealed properly to keep warm air in, cold air out. Other common air leak locations are floors, walls, ceilings, ducts, fireplaces, plumbing and electrical outlets. *A home energy survey can show you how you're losing warm air without realizing it.*
- **Have your heater checked.** As heater use kicks in, one of the most serious concerns you face is the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. This is an odorless, colorless gas that can build up when heaters aren't properly ventilated, causing serious illness. Make sure your heater is checked each year by a professional. Call us to schedule a time.

## MY WORD

### The Classroom

By Brian J. McDonald

Hello Friends,

It's great to be back in touch after a busy Summer. Hope you're enjoying yourself.



For a lot of families, Fall ushers in a new "learning season." As kids head off to new classrooms and new experiences, sometimes you can't help remembering your own school days.

During my time in school, I learned a lot – and forgot a lot – but apparently I'm in good company. As Albert Einstein once said, "Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school."

I can relate. I don't always remember the history dates, mathematical equations, or scientific theories that showed up in the textbooks. But somewhere along the way, I learned some basics that have stuck with me year after year.

For example, there will always be someone who knows more than I do. And there will always be someone I can help.

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Your Quick Call Comfort Hotline:

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Is Illness in the Air?

Worse Than Being Drunk?

The dangers of texting and driving are real.

During a study conducted last year by Car and Driver, participants were asked to hit the brake when a red light appeared on the windshield. In the worst-case result of that study, as one participant was sending a text, it took him an unbelievable 70 feet longer to hit the brake than when he was driving unimpaired. Reading an email added 36 feet. And both figures were even worse than being drunk which for this participant added "only" four feet.

Likewise, a Virginia Tech Transportation Institute study found that texting truck drivers were 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than non-distracted drivers.

The National Safety Council cites public opinion surveys that repeatedly show that Americans consider distracted driving a serious safety concern. Texting and driving bans are being enacted in communities across the country. And Oprah's in on it too, asking guests and viewers to sign a "no phone zone" pledge.

So take this call to safety seriously. Talk to your kids, your spouse - even yourself - and keep your eyes on the road, your hands on the wheel and your mind away from that message that can wait.

Sometimes, when you're sneezing, nursing a sore throat, maybe a headache, you'd just like to curl up at home and recuperate with a cup of hot tea. Oddly, however, the very home where you seek soothing comfort could actually be the source of your symptoms.

One of today's more serious health concerns has to do with the air quality inside the home. It's affected by a lot of potential sources: pet dander, dust, cooking smoke, scented candles, cleaning solutions and more.

To preserve your health, be aware of the stuff that's in your air. The contaminants that filter in can make you uncomfortable. They can also prompt allergies, asthma attacks and other respiratory issues. Some unseen gases can be so dangerous they put your life at risk.

No Odor, No Color Can Equal Big Danger. Carbon monoxide (CO) is a particular concern. Because it's odorless and colorless, you might not know it's there. But it's very dangerous and can cause sudden illness and death. Again, the symptoms are the same that other common illnesses create:

- Headache
• Dizziness
• Weakness
• Nausea
• Vomiting
• Chest pain
• Confusion

To preserve your health, be aware of the stuff that's in your air.

CO is found in many heating systems. As fumes build up, you can be poisoned by breathing them in. Make sure you have a CO detector and have your heating system inspected before the cold season.

Breaking Mold's Hold. Mold, another big problem for homeowners, grows in warm, damp and humid conditions - which means damp or wet spots in your home can be breeding grounds for mold. The

mold spores that are emitted into the home can cause allergic reactions and asthma attacks, even fungal infections or irritation to eyes, skin, nose, throat and lungs. Your best defense against mold is to control the moisture in your home.

Get Your Free Report. There are other indoor air concerns too - some of which should be addressed by a professional (like lead paint removal) - while some homeowners just need guidance and a place to start. We've got that for you in our free report entitled, "Best Bets for Breathing Better." Call us and we'll send you a copy.

"Quotable"
"For man, Autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together. For nature, it is a time of sowing, of scattering abroad."
- Edwin Way Teale

## Search for Your Home's Hidden Dangers

Home life can be busy in Fall, and that often means more people are gathering there. Yet there are many hidden dangers that can cause illness or injury before we know it. So give your home a once-over for safety issues that you may have overlooked, and take steps to keep your family and friends secure.

**Fire Prevention** – Make sure smoke alarms are installed outside bedrooms and on every level of your home, and test them monthly to make sure they're operating effectively. Plan and practice fire escape routes too.

Fire prevention practices should also include:

- Cooking safety – Don't leave unattended food cooking.
- Make it a habit to remove dryer lint, which collects in exhaust ducts and can catch fire.
- Make sure furnaces, fireplaces, wood-burning stoves, space heaters, and gas appliances are vented properly and inspected annually.

**Indoor Air** – Have you installed carbon monoxide (CO) alarms outside your bedrooms? CO is an odorless,

colorless and deadly gas, and it can be produced by a malfunctioning home heating system. Have your heater tuned and checked prior to the heating season.

Though not as deadly as CO, there are a number of sources of bad "indoor air" that can also affect your family's health and well-being. Dust, pet dander and insect parts circulate through airtight homes, while mold is another hidden threat that can aggravate allergies and asthma. Practice regular cleaning and, if you've got concerns, call for an indoor air inspection for a clear picture of what you're breathing.

**Trips and Falls** – You can trip and fall at any age, any time. But a few precautions will help. Keep stairways and hallways well-lit and remove tripping hazards, like toys or sports gear. Also, look for tripping hazards in electrical cords and wiring from lamps, appliances or electronics.

**Poison Prevention** – Lock away medicines and vitamins and keep cleaning solutions, pesticides and other dangerous substances in their original, labeled containers, and out of the reach of children.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- *Abraham Lincoln was the only US president ever granted a patent.*
- *Mockingbirds can imitate any sound from a squeaking door to a cat meowing.*
- *"The sixth sick sheikh's sixth sheep's sick" is said to be the toughest tongue twister in the English language.*
- *Ketchup was sold in the 1830's as medicine.*
- *The little plastic things on the end of shoelaces are called aglets.*
- *Kemo Sabe, meaning an all knowing one, is actually a mispronunciation by Native Americans of the Spanish phrase, Quien lo Sabe, meaning "one who knows".*



## Making Kitchen Time Family Time

Family memories are built on a lifetime of little moments. But with today's hurried pace, these little moments can seem hard to find. Make a plan to capture what you can, starting with time spent in the kitchen.

By involving kids in preparing the family meal, they'll gain in many ways – from the spirit of togetherness that strengthens the family bond, from the confidence they'll feel for a job well done, and from the practical experience they'll get in meal preparation.

**Start with planning and shopping.** Talk with the kids about the menus that are coming up, and let them have a say in what's going to be served. Involve them in selections and price comparison.

**Keep teaching while cooking.** Talk about the different elements that make up a well balanced diet. For example, you could explain why "well-balanced" is not a plate of mashed potatoes, french fries and macaroni and cheese. Talk about the sources of different vitamins and how they're helpful for growing bodies.

**Turn off the television,** or you'll have a big distraction on your hands while trying to keep the kids focused. The much more valuable "news and entertainment" will be what you learn from your children about their own day.

## MY WORD (...from page 1)

Those two facts are a big part of running this business. The team around here is committed to learning more ways that we can make your home more and more comfortable.

Sometimes we do this in a classroom setting of our own, but many times we learn as we serve.

And that leads to the second part: we are committed

to sharing our knowledge with you and are here to help whenever you have a concern. Just give us a call!

Brian J. McDonald

P.S. Don't forget to check out the special offers on this page for some big savings. If you aren't going to be able to use them, please feel free to pass them on to a friend, neighbor or family member.

### HomePoints

Try to cut down on the use of kitchen and bathroom fans during cool weather. These fans cool the air and waste household heat.

## Time for Your System to Come Clean.

Yes, your home comfort system has been keeping a dirty little secret – dirt is actually the #1 cause of comfort system failures. A little cleaning goes a long way toward keeping you cozy.

That's why we recommend a Tune-Up before each season of high use. Your system will run more smoothly, use less energy, and keep you comfortable year round. So call **Outer Banks Heating & Cooling at (252) 441-1740** to schedule your Tune-Up. You'll save your system and your wallet.

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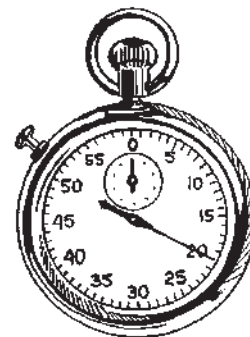
## Better Home Comfort, Easier Than Ever, Ends Soon

Great news from Carrier! This Fall you have a great opportunity to improve your family's comfort and save up to \$1,000 on a new comfort system and get **financing as low as 4.99%**. When paired with the federal tax credit your **return on investment can be as much as 14%!**

Give us a call at **441-1740** for the details.

## Tax Credit Last Chance

**Are you really going to walk away from the \$1,500 the Government wants to give you to stay comfortable in your own home?**



It's true. The Government is ready to give you a 30% tax credit of up to \$1,500 when you replace your old energy-gobbling heat pump system with a newer model that conserves energy. But you have to act quickly, or you'll miss your chance.

This program ends completely on December 31. Give us a call at **252-441-1740** and find out more.

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