

## **INEXPENSIVE WAYS TO MAKE REBUILDING INSIDE LESS PAINFUL**

**TRENTON, N.J.** – Repairing damage after a disaster can be expensive. In cases of severe damage, repair costs can be staggering.

However, there are many improvements the handy homeowner can make for little or no money. Projects such as the ones below make a big difference when the next disaster comes to town, and provide the extra bonus of lowering utility and home-maintenance costs year-round.

Here are some ideas:

- **Cut it short.**

When replacing drywall, leave a ½-inch to 1-inch gap between the bottom of the drywall sheeting and the top level of the floor. (If adding carpeting, be sure the gap is above the carpeted level.) Cover the gap with baseboard.

If you gap the drywall, water won't come in contact with the material in a low-level flood (this includes interior liquid spills, like in a kitchen). When water meets drywall, it wicks up into the wallboard and can lead to mold if left untreated. The only solution for wet drywall is complete removal.

- **Power up.**

Raise electrical outlets. Check first to see what local codes allow, but most don't have restrictions on the height of an outlet above the floor. Consider moving outlets up at least 1 foot above the minimum flood level or 24 inches above floor level.

Raising outlets helps keep water from seepage or a low-level flood event from infiltrating and damaging an electrical receptacle, which can damage the electrical system and normally requires an electrician to repair or replace.

- **Weatherstripping always helps.**

Install weatherstripping on outside doors and windows to help seal out air and even water. Weatherstripping should seal well when a door or window is closed. A gap as small as 1/8-inch between a standard exterior door and its threshold is equivalent to a 2-square-inch hole in

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the wall. Closing the gaps can save up to 15 percent in heating and cooling costs and can help minimize the intrusion of low-level water.

Weatherstripping is relatively easy to install, effective, durable, and available in a variety of colors. Vinyl stripping holds up well and resists moisture. Metal stripping lasts for years. Both are affordable.

- **Turn on the radio.**

Buy a NOAA Weather Radio to get advanced warning of weather emergencies from the nearest National Weather Service office. Radio broadcasts include such information as

watches and warnings for heavy rains, flash flooding, severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, extreme heat or cold warnings, creek and river rises, and other hazards. Information is broadcast, as needed, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Weather radios provide early warning to save lives and protect property. Most radios are portable and operate on AC power or batteries. Many weather radios are inexpensive enough to have more than one (house, office, cabin, car, boat, etc.)

During rebuilding or reconstruction, local authorities decide where and how structures will be rebuilt. Federal guidelines can assist the local community as it rebuilds but the reconstruction process is mandated by local building codes and requirements.

Before spending a weekend raising electrical receptacles, for instance, check with the local building office to see if a permit and or inspection is not required for small improvements.

Many neighborhoods and communities have requirements about the way a home looks from the outside, so it is always best to ask before you begin your project.

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