

# H O U S I N G The Portland Observer

## Avoid Wind Damage Repair Scams

Last Tuesday's wind storm caused massive damage to buildings in many parts of the state.

Experience has show the Construction Contractors Board that scam repair businesses flourish after weather-related emergencies.

The board, a state consumer protection agency, warns homeowners not to hire unregistered, illegal contractors to fix roofs, gutters, patio coverings, concrete, fences and other damaged caused by the storm. Cutting down standing trees also requires board registration.

Board administrator Ken Keudell says that although most contractors are honest people, con-

struction is like any industry and has its share of fraud.

Keudell suggests being careful of contractors who offer home repairs door-to-door. They often demand a full or partial down payment, do little or no work, leave and never return. Or they do a very shoddy job with poor materials. Check them out with the board before contracting with them.

Officials also said to be wary of telephone solicitors, but if you make an appointment with them, call the board first.

Registration does not guarantee competence but it does mean they are bonded and have liability insurance which is some financial protection

for consumers if there are problems later. Call the board at 378-4621, extension 4900, to check on a contractor's registration and open claims status.

The board also advises not to contract for any repairs until you have been given a written contract that says exactly what will be done and at what price.

Do not offer 100 percent of the payment up front (legitimate contractors often ask for a third up front to cover materials).

Keudell also suggests that owners trust their gut feelings.

"If it doesn't feel right, don't hire them and if it seems to good to be true, it probably is," he said.

## Energy & Environment Fair Can Warm Up Your Winter

Whether you want to stop that cold draft under your front door or insulate your attic, the City of Portland's Energy and Environment Fair is the place to find free help weatherizing your home. Workshops on do-it-yourself weatherization will run throughout the Fair, and the first 150 people attending will receive a free kit including reusable plastic storm windows and weatherstripping. Households that qualify based on their income will be able to sign up for free insulation for their home's attic, walls, or floors. Homeowners and renters are welcome to participate. To qualify for free insulation, a

family of four would need to have a combined income less than \$1,800 per month. A single person with an income less than \$1,200 per month would qualify. Anyone with higher income can come to the Fair to find out about rebates, loans, and do-it-yourself information. According to Matt Emlen in the City of Portland Energy Office, households can save over \$100 per year through weatherization.

In addition to energy conservation, the Fair will feature exhibits on water conservation, bicycling, recycling, and a number of community services. A free raffle will include

prizes such as compact fluorescent lightbulbs, Tri-Met tickets, and a watering can full of water conservation items. Hot coffee will be served, and Northwest Natural Gas will be on hand giving out free hot dogs.

Free child care will be provided. Those with questions about the event should call Matt Emlen at 823-7224. People with disabilities who need assistance to attend should call 823-7224 or TDD/TTY 823-6868.

Energy & Environment Fair  
Saturday, January 6-9:00 AM to 1:30 PM

Boise-Eliot School-620 N Fremont

## Property Tax Appeals Due

The Oregon Department of Revenue is reminding taxpayers that they may appeal property values on their property tax statements by filing an appeal no later than Jan. 2.

Appeals are available from county clerk or county assessors' offices.

Taxpayers must file their appeal with the county board of equalization, which meets from Jan. 13 to April 15 to consider the appeals of the assessor's estimate of value.

Under Oregon law, taxpayers who appeal must present evidence to support the value

they are appealing.

The evidence could be an appraisal done by an independent appraiser or comparison of nearby properties that recently sold.

Before taxpayers file an appeal, they can talk to the staff in the county assessor's office about the real market value of the taxpayer's property and sales data.

Taxpayers can also check the information in the assessor's file used for the appraisal.

More information is available from the county assessor's office.

# HORTI-GRAPHICS

A Landscape Service Maintenance Company  
CHRISTMAS SPECIAL! \$25.00 GIFT CERTIFICATES

Service Special for  
Dec/Jan/Feb  
Gutter Clean-out \$28.99  
(average size, one story,  
single family home)  
\$25.00/hour for larger homes

Call Richard Dobbins  
503 335-8525  
or (pager) 503 202-9428  
Licensed • Bonded • Insured  
CCB#108942

OTHER SERVICES:  
• Leaf Clean-up & Disposal  
• One Time Landscape Clean-up  
• Horticultural Consultations

# Health & SCIENCE

## Holiday Safety Tips

**Beware of Holiday Lighting** - Take care when burning candles. Be sure they are kept away from decorations or other combustible materials. Don't leave children unattended in a room with lighted candles, and always keep candles, as well as matches and lighters, out of the reach of children. Never display lighted candles in windows or near exits.

**Test Tree Trimming** - When decorating with lights, be sure to purchase only those labeled by a testing laboratory. Never use candles to decorate Christmas trees. For outside decorations, use only those lights labeled for outdoor use. Don't overload electrical outlets, and always unplug all lights before leaving home or going to bed. Never put electrical lights on a metal Christmas tree.

**Cook with Care** - Wear tight fitting clothing when cooking; loose clothing can be ignited by hot burners. Always turn pot handles in. Don't

store items on the stove top; they could catch fire. Keep kitchen appliances clean and in good condition and turn them off after use. Don't overload electrical outlets, and don't use appliances with frayed or cracked wires.

**Prepare for Holiday Parties** - Decorate only with flame-retardant or noncombustible materials. Avoid using candles during parties. If guests will be smoking provide them with large, deep ashtrays and check them frequently. After the party, check in side and under upholstery and in trash cans for cigarette butts that may be smoldering.

**Designate a Driver** - When attending a party, always designate a non-drinking driver. If you are the host of a holiday gathering, be sure there are non-alcoholic beverages available for guests who are driving.

**Buckle Up** - During the holiday months, people travel more than ever.

Wearing a seat belt is the easiest and best way to prevent injury in a motor vehicle collision. Ensure that all passengers are also wearing safety belts.

**Keep Christmas Trees Fresh** - Choose a fresh Christmas tree and secure it in a sturdy stand. Place the tree away from heat sources and exits, and water it daily. If you purchase an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant. If you plan to hang stockings on your fireplace, don't burn fires in it.

**Be Cautious with Portable and Space heaters** - Place space heaters at least three feet (one meter) away from anything combustible, including wall paper, bedding, clothing, pets, and people. Never leave space heaters operating when you are not in the room or when you go to bed. Don't leave children or pets unattended with space heaters and be sure everyone knows that drying wet mittens or other clothing over space heaters is a fire danger.

## Care Info-Small Company With A Big Heart

In the small office of her home, Roxanne Kendrick, owner, answers the phone, "Care Info, how may I help you?" Care Info is the only statewide Elder Care Information and Referral Service, and is devoted entirely to the needs of the elderly and their families.

Conceived in 1994, Care Info is growing steadily, a piece at a time.

Care Info offers a "one phone call" method to locating help anywhere in the State of Oregon. The database currently carries Adult Day Care, Adult Foster Care, Assisted Living, Residential Care, Senior Adult Housing, Hospice, Home Health services, and Elder Care specific legal counsel, as well as, which state agencies assist with what. A complete "Who to see, where to go, what to do" service.

Why statewide? Kendrick explains, "Families are more transient today and often children move away due to careers, or schooling needs. Now the Baby Boomers, of the 40's and 50's, are faced with the decision making process concerning care for their elderly or ailing family member.

Many times, families have to make several calls, trying to pin down exactly what's available in different areas of Oregon. It can be an exasperating and trying situation. For instance, a lady called who lived in Terrebonne, one of her brothers lived in Portland, and another brother in Klamath Falls. The recent death of their father necessitated the need for them to make decisions about care for their mother, (who, by the way, lived in Eugene) The family needed information on services available in

each area. Care Info was able to supply them with the information they needed in order to make and informed decision. I provide more than just a name and phone number. I am able to give them details on each particular home or service. It doesn't do any good to refer someone to a service that wouldn't be able to help them or that doesn't offer what they need or want."

"Lifestyle transitions are sometimes painful and traumatic," Kendrick says, "it just seems to me, that it should be a whole lot simpler, it's unnecessary to add confusion to the process. Simplify it!"

Care Info is supported by participating businesses and services. To ask about adding your service/business call (541) 928-6476. For information on Elder Care Services in Oregon Call 1-800-933-6164.

# AUTOMOTIVE

## Motorists Should Celebrate Responsibly

Motorists are being urged to do their part in making this a safe holiday season by participating in the second annual AAA Oregon Designated Driver Program.

The program was developed as an easy, no-cost alternative for motorists to return home from holiday parties and get-togethers.

"It's AAA's way of encouraging motorists to celebrate responsibly and make the holidays safer for all who share the roads," said AAA President Roger Graybeal.

Each year, hundreds of lives are lost in alcohol-related crashes.

During the holidays, the incidents of alcohol-related crashes increases.

Last year, alcohol-related crashes claimed the lives of 200 people on Oregon roads. Alcohol is a contributing factor in more than 40 percent of all fatal accidents in the state.

"The cost of these crashes, injuries and fatalities is staggering," said Graybeal. "In addition to the personal tragedy, we as a nation, pay at least \$46 billion in lost productivity, medical costs, property damage and other direct expenditures."

The Designated Driver Program reinforces positive behavior

while encouraging motorists to be cognizant of the role alcohol plays in crashes.

The guidelines for participating in the program include the adoption of a zero-tolerance policy for driving after consuming alcohol, choosing a designated driver before celebrations or holiday gatherings begin and sharing driving responsibilities with others.

Volunteer to be a designated driver and set an example for your children, your loved ones and your neighbors, officials said.

## Fuel Prices For Holiday Travel

The AAA Oregon Fuel Gauge Survey shows the average price for regular unleaded mini-serve gasoline at \$1.28 per gallon, down 2 cents since the Thanksgiving holiday and up one cent from this time a year ago.

The average prices per gallon for other fuels are as follows: mid-grade unleaded, \$1.36; premium unleaded, \$1.46; diesel, \$1.33.

**Availability And Prices**  
Of the stations surveyed, 53% plan to be open on Christmas day.

Fuel is most expensive in the western region, and least expensive along the I-5 corridor.

**Travel Tips**  
**Air travel:**

- Travel with photo identification. Have it handy in case you're asked to present it.

- Reconfirm your flight directly with the airline 24 to 48 hours prior to departure.

- Consider using public transportation or having a friend drive you to the airport to avoid the increased traffic and parking delays.

- Arrive at the airport at least an hour and a half prior to a domestic flight, two hours prior to international flights.

- Keep carry-on baggage to a minimum. Overhead bin capacity is often limited during peak holiday periods.

**Auto travel:**

- Check your vehicle's fluid levels and make sure the ties, including the spare, are in good condition and properly inflated.

- Plan your route in advance. Keep a map handy.

- Carry emergency items in your car, including a flashlight with fresh batteries, blankets, jumper cables and a flare or reflective triangle.

- If driving to a cold weather destination, carry an ice scraper, tire chains, a small shovel and a small bag of abrasive material such as sand or non-clumping kitty litter.

- Carry a cellular phone.