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Dr. Handy Helper Answers Your Questions On Screws, SmartVents, CO Detectors, and CFLs

BY DOUG BROWN

Neighbors InDeed's Dr. Handy Helper is back again by popular request with the next set of enlightening answers to your most perplexing questions!

Dear Dr. Handy Helper:

I keep hearing about 3" SCREWS FOR DOORLOCKS. What's this all about and what should I do? – Stymied on Stockman Lane

Dear Stymied:

In some of our SCLH homes, the builders cut corners by installing deadbolt plates (the metal plate on the door frame that the deadbolt slides into) with four 1" screws where two 3" screws are required (on the outside part of the plate) to anchor the plate to the stud behind your door frame. Without the 3" screws, your door is vulnerable to break-ins. If you believe your screws are too short (the heads of the 3" screws are larger than the 1" screws), for a free replacement, email Pulte-Del Webb at sacreno@delwebb.com, or Fax a request to 1-800-917-2201, or send a letter to 4196 Douglas Blvd. Suite 100, Granite Bay, CA 95746. – Dr. HH

Dear Dr. Handy Helper:

My house has a SMART VENT. Maybe I'm not so smart, but what is this, how do they work, and what should I do to program it? – Venting on Violet Lane

Dear Venting:

SmartVents were installed in some SCLH homes to provide air circulation to cool your house at night during the hot summer months. When the outside air temperature dips about 6° lower than your indoor temperature, the fan kicks on, pulling cool outside air into your house. If your HVAC system has a SmartVent, go to "SmartVent" on the menu of your thermostat and adjust the "Set Point"

temperature to around 68-72° – that’s when it will shut off. Call a Handy Helper at 223-2763 if you need some help with this adjustment. For those who don’t have SmartVents, no worries, just open your windows at night and you’ll achieve about the same effect. – Dr. HH

Dear Dr. Handy Helper:

There was an article last month about Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors, and it said we don’t need COMBINATION CO-SMOKE ALARMS in our houses since smoke alarms are already installed and hard wired. Wouldn’t a hard-wired CO alarm be a good idea? – Wired on Winding Way.

Dear Wired:

The advantage of hard-wired alarms applies to any alarm type, so if you have a CO detector that’s hard-wired, all the alarms in your house will sound if there’s CO in any part of your house – just like smoke alarms.

If you want to replace all your current hard-wired smoke alarms with combination CO-smoke alarms, you certainly can. And if the smoke alarms in your house haven’t already been replaced (they tend to have a service life of about 10 years), you might indeed want to consider the combination alarm as a replacement, and kill two birds with one stone. (Well, uh, please forgive Dr. HH for the bad metaphor...but you get my drift.)

BRK model SC9120B (available in local home maintenance stores for between \$35 and \$48) is a combination alarm that’s a direct replacement for the First Alert or BRK smoke alarms in most of our houses. You will need to do this job yourself or call a professional Handyman, since it’s a job that’s a bit too long for a Handy Helper to do. (Thanks to Ed M. for this advice.) – Dr. HH

Dear Dr. Handy Helper:

There’s word in the rumor mill that Neighbors InDeed is still doing CFL “AUDITS” in our homes and that the 100th person to request an audit will get a free vacation to Tahiti. Could it be? – Amped-up on Andover Lane

Dear Amped-up:

Well, Neighbors InDeed is still doing CFL audits (where a Handy Helper comes to your home and determines which light bulbs you can change out for the most energy savings). We're up to 95 now, and no, sorry, there's no vacation in Tahiti promised, but yes, we'll give a worthwhile little surprise "bonus" to the 100th customer! Call us at 223-2763 and sign up. – Dr. HH

Keep your questions coming, and by all means if you need any assistance with home maintenance chores, referrals to reputable businesses and agencies, or a loan of a piece of medical equipment, call Neighbors InDeed. We're neighbors helping neighbors. It takes a village...