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## How to Avoid a “Flood” of Problems

Tips from Neighbors InDeed

BY DOUG BROWN

Our hearts sank. We had only been away from our Bay Area house for a few hours, but as we drove into the driveway we were greeted with a rush of water flowing out from under the garage door. Oh, %\*#&! What happened?

On entry, it was suddenly apparent. Water was gushing from the upstairs bathroom, into the downstairs half bath, and out into the family room. But that was only half of the story. More water was flowing out of the garage ceiling, into the garage, and out to the street.

Dashing upstairs, I found the source: a toilet supply line had failed (due to a deteriorated washer) and was spraying water everywhere, flooding carpets and flooring. After two weeks of workmen, whirring fans, and a \$10,000 bill, our house was back to normal. What an ordeal!

Could this happen to you? Here in this “new” development, a mere decade old? Well, yes. And it has happened to several Lincoln Hills residents. So, is there a way to prevent such an accident and the resulting flood in your house? Again, yes.

### INDOOR WATER SUPPLY LINES

You know those hose connectors that supply water to your toilets, sinks, washing machine, refrigerator, and dishwasher? You can now purchase very affordable “FloodSafe” connectors from home supply stores, install them easily, and have peace of mind about any potential catastrophic deluge of water in your house.

How do they work? Home Depot’s Gene Womack explained that FloodSafe connectors include the usual standard braided stainless steel flexible hose with a very small automatic shutoff device built into one end. If any sudden or excess water flow occurs, the device senses this change and shuts off the flow of water. It remains in a closed position until it’s reset.

Gene also noted that FloodSafe connectors are easy to install. “Shut off your water supply under the sink or toilet, disconnect the old connector, and put in the new one, and you’re good to go,” said Gene, who has had very positive

reports from his customers. Tools required: an adjustable wrench! Or, of course, have a plumber do it – call Neighbors InDeed at 223-2763 for referral to some reputable plumbers.

Before you go to Home Depot or another home maintenance store, measure your existing connectors to get the right length for each. Cost? All the FloodSafe connectors run just a couple of dollars more than conventional ones – from as low as \$7 for a 12-inch hose to \$28 for a pair of six-foot washing machine hoses.

## IRRIGATION VALVES

Maybe this has happened to you. You notice one day an unusually large overflow of water out of your yard and into the street. If you've already made sure your timer is correctly set, and that sprinklers and drippers are intact, the problem could be in your valves that control your outdoor sprinkler and dripper systems.

These valves are at the side of your house – there could be as few as two and as many as six, depending on the size of your yard. If you don't have them covered with a box or cover that shades them from the sun's heat (which causes them to crack), they can deteriorate over time. Neighbors InDeed has found that as our homes age, irrigation valves are failing.

A faulty valve may have two consequences: Either your water will not turn on at all, or, if it's already on, fail to shut off. The latter could result in a flood of water in your yard or out into your street – and a hefty spike in your water bill!

The solution? First, shut off your irrigation water line. The shut-off valve is located in the ground, covered with a plate, on the street side of your other valves. Then, replace the bad valve. Sometimes simply replacing the small solenoid activator on the valve will do the trick. Turn the water back on and you're good to go.

Home Depot and other such stores can supply the necessary parts (see photo) and offer installation advice. In some cases a Handy Helper (223-2763) might be able to install one new valve for you. Replacing more than one valve is too lengthy a job for Handy Helpers – but call Neighbors InDeed for a recommended plumber if you need one.

If you've had any trouble with a valve, consider replacing it before it fails completely. An ounce of prevention...., goes the old adage.