

Dust comes in many forms and levels of toxicity

BY JAMES AND MORRIS CAREY
The Associated Press

With record-low interest rates, home remodeling continues at high levels all around the country. As a result, drywall dust, sanding debris, lead paint from layers in an old home, dust and toxic particles tracked around by family, guests and workers cause an invisible but substantial threat.

Home remodeling — and construction in general — demands increased cleaning to avoid potential health risks from the dust in question.

We often forget that everyday household dust contains toxic substances such as pesticides and carcinogens. Any street, garage or driveway harbors toxic particles picked up on tires or spread by cars, including used motor oil, gasoline additives and combustion products.

Toxins in dust and allergens, such as dust mites, aggravate allergies and asthma, but can affect many more people with fatigue, lack of concentration, eye and skin irritation, dizziness and headaches.

When remodeling, seal off the work area and place doormats outside the area to avoid tracking dust from remodeled areas to other parts of the house. Keep toddlers, pregnant women and young children away from remodeling areas. Keep pets from tracking dust and debris around the home.

Other simple steps help create a more healthful indoor environment — before, during and after the dust settles from remodeling construction. Thorough cleaning is crucial and several powerful weapons are important:

■ Doormats. (Place one on the outside and one on the inside at every exterior door.)

■ A high-quality vacuum cleaner or vacuuming system.

■ A hot water extraction cleaner.

■ An air purifier.

Believe it or not, your doormats are your first line of defense against the germ warfare we just described. They help keep large amounts of dust, toxins and allergens from being tracked into the home. You

need two at every exterior door. One outside that has bristles for wiping and scrubbing and a softer highly absorbent one for the inside to clean — and dry — shoe soles. In many countries, including Japan, and even in certain parts of this one (Hawaii), it is customary to remove shoes at the front door. As a tourist at a Hawaiian hotel, you might not be exposed to this custom, but you'll see it in wide practice in private homes.

A vacuum also is important. Whatever gets past the doormat must be dealt with. A 10-year-old carpet on average contains up to two pounds of dust. Deep dust tends to collect in

older or worn carpets. As with most modern technology, vacuum cleaners are more sophisticated than ever. Just as important as vacuuming carpets and bare floors is vacuuming wherever dust may settle — high and low — in the house. Use vacuum tools to remove dirt and dust from bedding, draperies, upholstered furniture, tables and shelves. And also use them to get at dust along baseboards, walls, ceilings and in corners and crevices. A powered hand tool is a must for these tasks.

Here are a few innovations that can help you get things cleaner:

■ Use a vacuum cleaner with a dirt sensor to be

sure the dust and dirt you can't see is being removed. Don't guess — the sensing technology is at hand.

■ Twin agitators are an important advancement. How well a vacuum cleaner picks up dirt, dust and dust mites and removes particles from floors and other horizontal surfaces is significant. Twin spinning agitators lift dirt and dust by separating the carpet fibers and opening the carpet up to deeper cleaning. This keeps dirt from being scattered back onto the floor. The single agitator has serious competition now.

■ Dual ducts that channel particles into the vacuum cleaner's dirt container keep them from being scat-

tered back onto the carpet, as well.

In the past, deep-cleaning, using hot water extraction, has been something you undertook with rental equipment or by hiring a professional. Times are changing. Now you can own your own hot water extraction carpet cleaning system for less than \$400. They work really well. Deep-cleaning washes the carpet and helps remove soot and gooey particles that stick to carpet fibers and trap harmful substances.

Indoor pollution can be five times higher than outdoor pollution, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA has declared indoor

air quality to be one of the five most urgent environmental risks to public health. Particles smaller than 10 microns (an average household dust particle is 10 microns) are likely to be inhaled into the lungs; smaller particles might penetrate deeply into the lungs.

One effective way to clear the air and help remove airborne irritants is by using an air purifier. It's an essential part of total indoor pollutant control. There are units on the market now that will capture airborne contaminants as small as .002 microns, using electrostatic technology in combination with a special collection sheet.

Sound

Systems for all needs and budgets

◀Continued from Page 1

arguably the most important element. The Sound Room recommends the brand Paradigm, which offers surround sound systems from \$750 up to \$2750.

Best Buy's Dunbar suggested Yamaha floor speakers at about \$500/pair.

"They're awesome. They

have separate wires for highs and separate wires for lows," Dunbar said, referring to speaker range and tone.

Another factor to consider when buying a system is the room itself: most importantly, its size and shape.

"All those factors are different. So in one case, you might be able to fill a room with great sound, but if you go to a larger room you'll need more power," Rising said.

The system should also meld with the aesthetics of the room, something that homeowners seem particu-

larly interested in these days, according to audio professionals.

"There is a departure from the great big stereo systems that take up a lot of space to these compact and hidden home theater systems," Smethwick said. "The customer wants compact, hidden, unobtrusive, but still demands the high end sound."

Rising agrees: "Good custom installation should be perceived as a synergy with the environment."

Joshua Alan Bradley is a local freelance writer.



Record-Eagle/John L. Russell

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