

Organize your home one step at a time

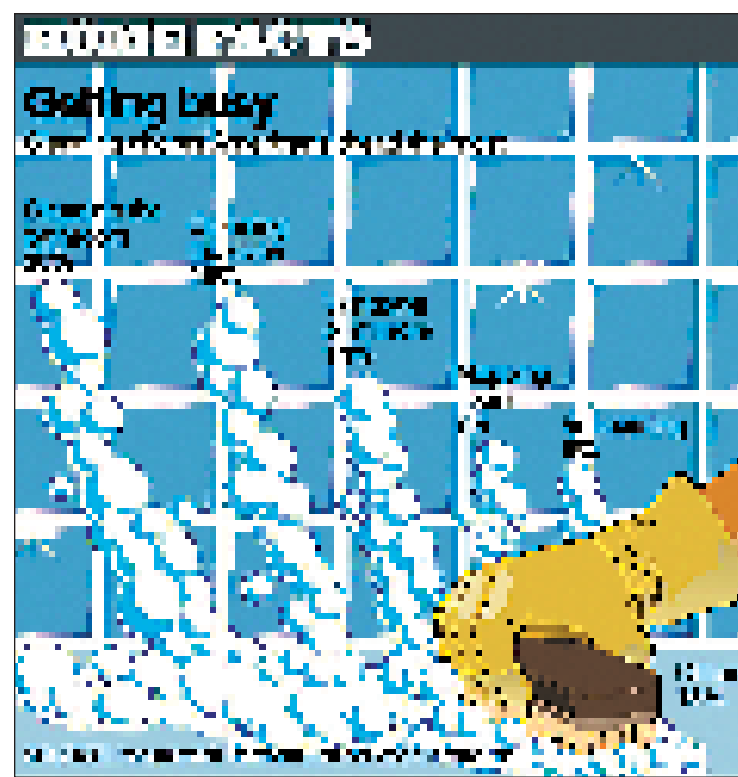
BY DAVID BRADLEY
For AP Weekly Features

North Americans apparently yearn to be free. Free of crowded closets, grungy garages and assorted other household clutter. That nearly 75 percent of recently polled homeowners deem an organized home as very important isn't terribly shocking to Mark Hillman. He just wants folks to be successful in their pursuit of order amid chaos. "Home organization is tough for people," says Hillman, home storage chief for Lowe's. "A room they decluttered last week may be a mess today. It's hard to pick up over and over unless you have a strategy to deal with all your stuff." Atop the must-organize heap according to consumers are messy garages, closets and kitchen drawers.

Attics, basements, home offices and bedrooms round out the list. Whether they become neatniks or not, many homeowners are eager to try tidiness. Hillman pegs the annual home storage market at nearly \$10 billion. He suggests the organizationally challenged adopt a multistep, one-room-at-a-time approach. Avoid frustration — and the tendency to put off until tomorrow what you can do today — by tackling one room at a time. Step one is the hardest: settle on what to keep and what to throw out, sell or recycle. "Those are the toughest decisions," says Hillman. Second, group items by frequency of use and location. Oft-used items merit the choicest storage locations. Items that get spotty use —

photo albums, seasonal clothing or decorations, etc., — can be tucked out-of-the-way. Third, measure storage spaces and belongings. This fits items to correctly sized containers and storage spaces. Ill-fitted storage is akin to stowing a tea cup in a box large enough for a table saw. If you're at your wit's end about how to prod children or teens to keep rooms picked up, involve them in storage decisions. Hillman says kids are much more likely to "buy into the process" if they have a degree of involvement. Storage goods have been swept up in the movement that dictates products must be efficient and attractive. On the efficiency front, Hillman says consumers will see mega-storage manufac-

turers such as Rubbermaid place much more emphasis on specialty storage items for specific solutions. Holiday decorations, equipment hangers, hand and garden tools and underutilized closet or bedroom space are likely spots for specialty items. In the closet, ever-popular wire-rack shelving and baskets are now combined with inexpensive yet esthetically pleasing laminate wood drawers, cabinets and shoe cubbies. This new storage can go floor to ceiling to fill previously underutilized space. But nowhere will consumers see more form-meets-function than in the garage. Hillman says Lowe's has seen considerable interest in the mother-of-all-garage systems, the Gladiator GarageWorks from



Whirlpool. This brute among storage systems features stamped metal tread plates for a one-of-a-kind look. There's even a side-by-side "Freezerator" (\$1,500) to go alongside such things as workbenches (\$450-\$500), trash compactors (\$500) and cabinets (\$130-\$400).

Coming to terms: Learning energy lingo can help homeowners

BY CAROLINE DIPPING
Copley News Service

You can't walk the energy walk unless you can talk the energy talk. Here are few energy terms that will put you in good stead, whether buying an energy-efficient appliance, talking to a contractor about energy-savvy modifications to your house, or impressing friends at your next party. **Ampere:** The standard measure of an electrical current's strength. If you multiply the volts (usually 110 for households) times the amps, you get watts. **British Thermal Unit (Btu):** The amount of heat required to raise the temperature of one pound of water 1 degree

Fahrenheit; equal to about 252 calories. **Compact Fluorescent:** Fluorescent lamps that can directly replace standard incandescent lights. These lights consist of a gas-filled tube, and a magnetic or electronic ballast. Compact fluorescents use 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs. **Double-Pane or Glazed Window:** A type of window having two layers (panes or glazing) of glass separated by an air space. Each layer of glass and surrounding air space reradiates and traps some of the heat that passes through, thereby increasing the windows resistance to heat loss (R-value).

EER: Energy Efficiency Ratio. Air conditioners have an energy-efficiency rating that lists how many Btus (British thermal units) per hour are removed for each watt of power it draws. This efficiency rating is the EER. **Energy Audit:** A survey that shows how much energy you use in your house or apartment. It will help you find ways to use less energy. **EnergyStar:** EnergyStar-labeled appliances mean that they have high EER and SEER (see below) ratings. **Grid:** The electricity transmission and distribution system. **Incandescent:** These lights use an electrically heated filament to produce light in

a vacuum or inert gas-filled bulb. **Kilowatt:** A standard unit of electrical power equal to one thousand watts. **Kilowatt-hour:** Ten 100-watt incandescent light bulbs, burning for one hour, would consume one kilowatt-hour of electricity. **Megawatt:** One thousand kilowatts, or 1 million watts; standard measure of electric power plant generating capacity. One megawatt-hour represents one hour of electricity consumption at a constant rate of 1 megawatt. **Phantom load:** Describes energy consumption that is employed by items not in use but that still draw power. Examples include

anything on with a remote control such as VCRs, TVs, stereos, clock radios and power strips left in the "on" position. **Photovoltaic device:** A solid-state electrical device that converts light directly into energy. Solar photovoltaic devices are made of various semi-conductor materials including silicon, cadmium sulfide, cadmium telluride and gallium arsenide, and in single crystalline, multi-crystalline or amorphous forms. **SEER:** Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio. An energy-efficiency rating for central air conditioners that lists how many Btu per hour are removed for each watt of

power it draws. **Volt:** A unit of electrical force. So what's the difference between volts and amps? The voltage supplied to your house is constant (about 110 volts and 220 for your drier and range) but the amps change, depending on the amount of power drawn by an appliance or a light bulb. The brighter the bulb (or the more energy inefficient an appliance), the more amps it draws, which means more watts, which means more kilowatts, which means a higher bill. **Watt:** The unit of electrical power (remember, volts multiplied by amps equals watts). The lower your wattage, the lower your bill.

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