

Home CAR

Six simple steps to avoid distracted driving

(BPT) - Mobile phones have become an essential part of life for most people, helping them stay connected and increase productivity. However, this technology can also be a distraction when driving, which puts everyone on the road at risk.

More than one-quarter of all car crashes involve phone use, both with handsets and hands-free, the National Safety Council reports. Considering many states and countries don't yet compile and report data on cellphone use following a crash, this number is likely much higher.

Distracted driving isn't just an issue for young adults. High technology use means this is a problem across generations. For professionals in particular, the expectation to stay productive and reachable means a constant temptation to use cellphones when driving.

Recognizing the ethical and liability issues that arise when employees drive while distracted, employers across the country have begun implementing distracted-driving policies. Typically, these policies prohibit employees from using mobile phones while driving on company time.

In January 2017, the NSC reported that Cargill was the largest privately held company to prohibit the use of mobile devices, including hands-free technology, while an employee is driving on behalf of the company. Cargill's Chairman and CEO David MacLennan just marked the one-year anniversary of fol-



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lowing the policy.

"I had to try the policy myself first," says MacLennan. "Once I knew what it would take to go completely cellphone free in my car, I could then make it work for our entire company."

Based on his experience, MacLennan offers these six simple steps for anyone looking to eliminate distracted driving yet stay productive and responsive to your job.

1. Auto response

Use a free automated response app to let callers know that you're driving and can't take the call. You can personalize the response so incoming calls or texts receive a text message saying you're on the road.

2. DND

If you're driving a vehicle outfitted with communication technology, use its "do not disturb" feature to unplug from calls and texts while behind the wheel.

3. Block drive times

Just as you schedule meetings, use shared calendars to block times you'll be driving. This alerts anyone else connected to your calendar when you'll be out of touch.

4. Out of sight, out of mind

A study by AT&T found that 62 percent of drivers keep their phones within reach in the car. Put yours where you can't see or reach it, such as in the back seat.

5. Pull over

If you must take a call

while on the road, let it go to voicemail and pull over in a safe location to return the call. Plan pull-over "cellphone stops" along your route if needed.

6. Avoid all distractions

Cellphones aren't the only cause of distracted driving. Eating, grooming and reading are activities people try to tackle while driving. Be smart and simply stay focused on the road.

Driving safely should be everyone's top concern when behind the wheel. These simple steps can make it easier to resist the temptation to pick up the phone or do another activity that can wait until you've arrived, safely, at your destination.

Road salt means safe roads

(BPT) - State and municipal departments of transportation are gearing up their winter maintenance plans to prepare for snow and ice. In addition to plows, road salt is an important tool to keep roads clear. Every year these agencies stockpile sufficient salt to last the winter season and store it in strategically placed barns.

"Snowfighters" (those responsible to clear snow from roadways) are out in force in salt trucks before snow and ice is expected. They pretreat the roads with salt brine, a mix of road salt and water. This brine sticks to the road surface and helps prevent ice from forming in the first place, making winter travel safer. And the safety issue is a substantial one. Statistics from the U.S. Department of Transportation show that there are about 115,000 people injured every year on snowy, slushy or icy pavements and more than 1,600 people killed each year on winter roads.

The good news is that a Marquette University study showed that a good winter maintenance program that uses road salt reduces accidents on winter roads by about 88 percent and can reduce injuries by up to 85 percent.

A key goal for many agen-

cies is tracking their winter maintenance actions in great detail and ensuring that their actions are optimized to meet their goal of safe roads for the driving public. In Idaho, for example, new salt-spreading units allow them to track how much salt they apply to the road, and other sensors allow them to check that the road is responding as expected to the salt application, and is not getting slippery. This also helps reduce costs. They have seen a 29 percent reduction in annual winter maintenance costs since introducing the new technology.

Maintaining mobility is also a big concern, as people need to get to work or the grocery store and kids need to get to school. Clear roads allow ambulances and other emergency vehicles to perform their life-saving services. A study for the American Highway Users Alliance found that the cost of having roads closed down is substantial - between \$300 million and \$700 million a day for a state in direct and indirect earnings. One study suggested that the costs of maintaining the road system during a winter storm are completely recovered in the first 25 minutes of winter-maintenance activities, because



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of the improvements in safety and mobility that the improved road conditions bring about.

Care for the environment is also a key issue in safe and sustainable snowfighting. Several studies have shown that when road salt is properly applied at the right time and place to keep roadways safe and passable, environmental impacts can be effectively managed and minimized. Modern roadways are not a natural feature of the environment and are specifically engineered to satisfy our demand for personal and commercial mobility - factors that are basic to the quality of life.

A comprehensive study by environmental researchers at the University of Waterloo and Environment Canada found

that when best practices, as outlined in Canada's Road Salt Code of Practice, were used, chloride levels were reduced by half. Another study by the Guelph University Research Review found that recycling stormwater runoff could reduce chloride peaks in streams without adversely affecting road safety. In cooperation with the city of Toronto, researchers used the EPA Storm Water Management Model to design computer-controlled stormwater containment systems to serve as a guide for future mitigation applications.

Salt is our most important winter resource, because it saves lives and protects the economy. It is economical and extremely effective.

5 aging-in-place bathroom upgrades to make while you're young(er)

(BPT) - Is it ever too early to think about aging in place, and making home improvements that will allow you to remain living in the same house well into your golden years? Homeowners in their 60s and 70s are no longer the only Americans investing thought and money into preparing their homes to meet their needs as they grow older - and that's good news, according to HomeAdvisor's 2016 Aging-in-Place report.

"If homeowners start early, they can spend sufficient time researching and planning to avoid wasted time and suboptimal solutions," Brad Hunter, HomeAdvisor's chief economist, says in the report. "Homeowners can protect, and possibly even raise, resale value of the home by making (it) more appealing to buyers in all age groups with modifications that have broad appeal."

The report notes universal design improvements, such as wider doorways and open floor plans, "can enhance the quality of life in a home even as they make the home safer ... and can be just as beneficial to a homeowner in their 30s or 40s as they are to a homeowner in their 70s or 80s."

Universally beneficial upgrades

Incorporating universal design principles into your home can facilitate aging-in-place goals, while comfortably addressing the diverse needs of all ages and mobility levels using your home. Features like single-story design, bedrooms and bathrooms on the ground floor, daylighting through larger windows and skylights, and wider doors and hallways appeal to users of all ages.

However, if you're considering aging-in-place upgrades, making improvements in the bathroom can deliver the greatest return on your investment. The bathroom is often referred to as the most dangerous room in the home for all ages, but especially for seniors with increased risk of falling in showers or bathtubs, or around the toilet area.

Upgrades to improve a bathroom's usability and safety can help people remain in their homes for longer. Here are bathroom improvements to consider:

- Replace a step-in bathtub with a walk-in option - Falls send thousands of older people to the emergency room each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For those with mobility issues and muscle weakness, lifting their legs to step into or out of a bathtub can be a fall risk. Tub manufacturers offer a range of solutions with walk-in bathtubs

designed to provide enjoyable bathing with safer accessibility. For example, the American Standard walk-in bathtub includes an outward opening door for easier access, molded seating for added comfort, and convenient grab bars for security. Plus, it offers a Quick Drain feature that removes water from the tub in less than two minutes, preventing the user from getting chilled sitting in the draining water.

- Shower seating - Showers also present a fall risk that affect people of all ages. Adding seating in a shower - whether a removable chair or bench, or built-in options - can allow you to relax in the shower with less fear of falling.

- Chair-height toilets - Standard toilets have a bowl height of about 14 to 15 inches. Toilets with higher bowls at 16 1/2 inches, similar to the familiar height of a chair, make it easier for everyone to stand up without a lot of effort. Water-conserving models like the American Standard VorMax high-efficiency Right Height elongated toilet are not only more comfortable, but they also facilitate cleanliness with powerful flushing action and technology that keeps the bowl cleaner. Toilets with built-in bidets are another smart option for those with dexterity and mobility issues, making it easier for them to maintain personal cleanliness without daily bathing.

- Pedestal sinks - Standard sinks are about 30 inches high. Installing a higher sink to reduce the amount of bending a user needs to do is another worthwhile bathroom improvement. While you can find vanity sinks set at a higher level, pedestal sinks of about 36 inches high have even more advantages. The slimmer, sleeker profile of a pedestal provides more maneuverable floor space for people with mobility issues or those using wheelchairs or walkers. Plus, the reduced footprint makes floor-cleaning easier.

- Easy-to-use faucets - Twist faucets can be difficult to manage for people with arthritis or decreased flexibility, as well as for small children just learning to use the facilities. Lever-style or single-handle faucets make controlling the water flow much easier for people of all ages and with varying skill levels.

Universal design home improvements can benefit all ages within your home. Making these upgrades at a younger age can prepare your home to meet your needs in your golden years, while allowing you to enjoy the comforts early on.

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Practical meets pretty: Fresh herbs at your fingertips, even in autumn

(BPT) - The end of summer doesn't have to mean the end of your gardening enjoyment, even if you don't have the time or climate for a full plot of food plants. Herbs are perfect fall crops; they are prolific growers, can satisfy your desire for fresh, garden-grown greens and are one of the easiest ways to elevate your recipes from so-so to so good! Plus, they're ready to harvest and growing your own will make a dent in your grocery bill.



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Herbs need at least four to six hours of natural light per day to grow indoors, so choose a sunny spot near a window where they'll be protected from drafts and cold.

The fall gardening experts at Bonnie Plants offer some gardening guidance for planting herbs this fall:

Getting started

Multiple factors will influence your choice of herbs, including fall temperatures, where you live, and your taste in seasonings.

If you decide to plant outdoors, it's important to know when to expect the first hard frost. You can find the estimated first frost date in your area by checking out Bonnie's online frost map.

You'll want to choose herbs that like cooler weather, such as parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme, mint, chives, lavender and oregano. They're all prolific producers and some, like mint and rosemary, are especially easy to grow. Availability of Bonnie's fall varieties is limited to specific regions, so check your local garden retailers.

Pick a place

You may envision pots full of leafy, green herbs sitting on a sunny windowsill, while colorful autumn leaves, or even snow, fall outside. However, windowsills aren't always a best bet for indoor herbs, especially if your windows are drafty or the herbs

brush the cold glass.

Herbs need at least four to six hours of natural light per day to grow indoors, so choose a sunny spot near a window where they'll be protected from drafts and cold. South- and southwest-facing windows will give you the most natural light throughout the day. Windows facing north won't provide enough sunlight.

Picking the right pots

If you really love rosemary, you may be tempted to try to plant the largest pot appropriate for your kitchen, but stick with manageable-sized pots that will fit better indoors, allow you to keep your herbs more organized, and still produce plenty of yield. Be sure to choose pots that have good drainage and always use a premium potting mix.

Caring for container herbs

Any type of plant growing in a pot needs water, and herbs are no exception. You'll need to keep a close eye on your herb plants' watering needs. Remember, dry topsoil is not an indication plants need water. A quick and easy test is to stick your finger, or a pencil, into the soil right where the stem enters the soil. If the soil is moist at 1.5 to 2 inches deep, do not water. If dry, it's time to water! Always water in the morning, at soil level and avoid watering the leaves, as bacteria can breed in cool, wet, damp and dark conditions, like night time.

Fertilize your food plants. Water is an obvious must, but irrigation can wash nutrients out of the soil. Plus, some potting mixes only have a short-term supply of fertilizer while oth-

ers are slow-release. Read the label on your premium potting soil mix and follow the brand's recommendations for fertilizing frequency. Timed-release granular fertilizer or a plant food you mix with water will help keep herbs nourished. Remember food plants are hungry!

Best bets on basil

Although basil is the most popular herb, it can sometimes struggle growing indoors. Start off growing it outdoors on a sunny deck. Be sure to continually pinch-off the prolific leaf growth, which encourages more growth and harvest, until the weather turns cool, then bring the pot indoors. Harvested leaves can be continually dried, although freezing does a better job of preserving the herb's flavor. Tip: Try using old ice-cube trays, inserting basil leaves in cells, filling with water and freezing. When weather gets cold, you can easily pop your "basil ice-cubes" in recipes throughout the cold weather season. Basil is also tasty in some drinks, like lemonade and tea.

While clipping sprigs when cooking is a great way to harness the freshness of any herb, you can also store them and they'll maintain their flavor. Preserving by drying and freezing aren't your only options; try adding herbs as seasoning to cooking oils.

Whether you're an expert gardener or a first-time fall grower, autumn is the perfect time to fall in love with the freshness, flavor and ease of herb gardening. You've still got time to get growing!



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Now is the perfect time to make a big impact on your home, and you can do so without spending a lot.

5 affordable weekend DIY projects that completely recreate your home

(BPT) - The cold months of winter have a batten-down-the-hatches feel to them, don't they? Fortunately, they're over. Now that summer is here, you want to spread out, bask in the beautiful weather and finally tackle those home improvement projects you were eyeing during those colder months.

Now is the perfect time to make a big impact on your home, and you can do so without spending a lot. Below are five do-it-yourself projects you can tackle in a single weekend, and each will still leave you enough money in your budget to enjoy everything else summer has to offer.

- Freshen up your landscaping. Your home's outdoor appearance gets a pass during the winter, but in the summer the exterior of the house is all about curb appeal. That makes improving your landscaping a great place to start your summer projects, plus the work you do can be completely customizable to your budget. If you have some extra money, plant a tree or a bush. If your budget is tighter, opt for potted flowers. Even an activity like trimming around your trees and bushes or pulling weeds can have a big impact on the look of your home and it costs you nothing.

- An accent wall that truly accents. You've seen hundreds of DIY tips suggesting you

add an accent wall to your home with a fresh coat of paint. However, to add an accent wall that goes above and beyond, replace the paint project with Charred Wood Shiplap from UFP-Edge instead. This wood, burnt through an ancient Japanese technique to highlight its beauty and character, then sealed with a satin finish, offers the perfect contrast to any room for an accent you'll relish every time you see it.

- Update your bathroom on your terms. A full bathroom remodel is hardly DIY, and you're certainly not finishing it in one weekend. However, that doesn't mean this room is completely off-limits when it comes to improvements. Instead, pick the project that matches your needs and your budget. Large-scale improvements could include replacing your outdated sink or toilet. You could go smaller and simply replace the hardware on the sink. This is also a great time to look at the smaller aspects of your bathroom and see if you want to replace your medicine chest, your towel rack or the handles on your cabinets.

- The perfect wrap for your kitchen or bar. The kitchen is a focal point in any home, so improvements made here tend to stand out. If you're looking to improve your kitchen with an incredibly popular country

look, you can add your island to the motif with a rustic wrap. UFP-Edge Rustic Collection is new lumber that has been distressed to provide that worn country charm. Rustic wood is available in shiplap siding and trim boards that allow you to create a wood project that supports your style in any size and any location. Start with a wrap for your kitchen or bar and see where your creativity takes you.

- Rethink your window treatments. Like your bathroom, a full-scale replacement of your window treatments can be pretty expensive. However, like your bathroom, you also have plenty of freedom to pick and choose your options here as well. If a favorite room feels too dark, replace the existing curtains with something light and airy. If you want the room to feel darker, install room-darkening shades. Spend your money and your time on the rooms that matter most to you and you won't be disappointed.

These warm-weather months are the perfect time to make your home everything you want it to be, so invest your time in a little DIY. You, your home and your budget will all be better for it. To learn more about these accent wall materials available from UFP-Edge, visit UFP-Edge.com.

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Home CAR

Fire away: Enhancing your home's safety with fire extinguishers

(BPT) - You check your alarms regularly and practice your family escape plan - but are you overlooking an essential component of home safety? Having fire extinguishers - and knowing how to use them - is an important part of maintaining a safe home for you and your family.

"In America, a fire starts in a residential home every 86 seconds - and the rapid protection offered by fire extinguishers can make the difference between minor or insignificant damage and greater tragedy," said Tarsila Wey, director of marketing for First Alert, the most trusted brand in home safety. "However, because many Americans have never activated a traditional fire extinguisher before, many do not understand the essential role that fire extinguishers play in a home safety plan, and lack the confidence and know-how to use them properly."

To help overcome this, follow these tips on fire extinguisher placement and usage to help ensure you and your family are properly prepared in case of emergency:

Compare features: When selecting a fire extinguisher, two of the most important features are size and intended use. Larger commercial fire extinguishers meant for public spaces may be too heavy or unwieldy for some family members. Select a home fire extinguisher that weighs 3 lbs. or less for easy handling. For home fire extinguishers, other features to look for include a metal valve and trigger, which offer the durability of a commercial grade extinguisher, as well as an easy-to-read color-coded gauge for accurate measurement. Spray times also vary by make and manufacturer, so select extinguishers that perform above the standard and feature longer spray times. Remember, a fire extinguisher that has been discharged is no longer effective, so consider rechargeable extinguishers which can be recharged by a certified professional if the unit is used.

Keep it in reach: If a fire breaks out in the living room but the extinguisher is elsewhere, you may not be able to access it before the fire grows beyond control. When seconds count, having an extinguisher nearby is crucial for rapid response.



BPT Photo

Place an extinguisher in each area of the home where a fire could potentially occur, including the kitchen, living room, each bedroom and the garage. In most cases, one extinguisher is likely not enough protection for an entire household. In addition, make sure that every responsible member of your household (including house sitters and babysitters) knows where each fire extinguisher is placed.

For this reason, place an extinguisher in each area of the home where a fire could potentially occur, including the kitchen, living room, each bedroom and the garage. In most cases, one extinguisher is likely not enough protection for an entire household. In addition, make sure that every responsible member of your household (including house sitters and babysitters) knows where each fire extinguisher is placed. The National Fire Protection Association recommends installing fire extinguishers close to room exits so that you are able to discharge it and quickly escape if the fire cannot be controlled.

Know your ABCs: While they may all look similar, fire extinguishers have very specific ratings that indicate what kind of fire they are designed to extinguish. Extinguishers with a Class A rating are able to put out fires caused by wood, paper, trash and other common materials, while Class B rated extinguishers are intended for gasoline and flammable liquids. Class C rated extinguishers are meant for fires caused by electrical equipment, such as frayed cords. For general protection, it's best to select a multirated extinguisher, such as the First Alert Rechargeable Home Fire Extinguisher, that's capable of handling most types of household fires. Beyond the Rechargeable Home Fire Extinguisher, First Alert

offers an entire range of extinguishers for home and commercial use.

Know how to use it: Every First Alert fire extinguisher includes instructions on proper usage, but a simple way to remember is with the acronym PASS:

- * Pull the pin on the extinguisher
- * Aim the nozzle low toward the base of the fire
- * Squeeze the trigger
- * Sweep the nozzle from side to side

Frequently repeat the acronym when practicing your family escape plan so that if a fire occurs, the response will be automatic.

Know when to go: Combating small fires with an extinguisher is one component of a fire response plan, but the primary goal should be safe escape. The first step in any scenario should be to call 911. In addition, a fire extinguisher is no substitute for having - and regularly practicing - a home fire escape plan, and ensuring that proper functioning smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are installed throughout the home - one on each level and in every bedroom - to provide early detection. Keep in mind that alarms and fire extinguishers aren't designed to last forever, and must be replaced at least every 10 years.

To learn more about fire safety, visit FirstAlert.com.

Ready, set, guests: 3 paint projects for fall entertaining

(BPT) - "Despite the hectic chaos that comes with the back-to-school season and adapting our family schedules, I find fall to be the perfect time to tackle my home to-do list," explains Cyndy Aldred, the do-it-yourself paint blogger behind The Creativity Exchange. "It's perfect because fall is our favorite time of year for entertaining!"

With kids in school and summer travels winding down, fall can be the perfect time to complete quick projects to get your home ready for fall social gatherings. Whether you're gearing up for the big game or hosting next month's book club, Aldred offers her favorite paint projects that are sure to wow your guests.

- **Add instant curb appeal with painted porch furniture**

Aldred loves the tried-and-true trick of painting your front door, but she recommends adding an even bigger pop of color with painted furniture. For her front-porch makeover, Aldred painted her porch bench using PPG Timeless exterior paint and primer in a soothing, soft grey, Silver Reflection (50BG 54/017), and added decorative pillows to create a warm and welcoming entrance for a gathering of friends. With an open front porch, Aldred made sure to use PPG Timeless paint, available at The Home Depot, because it provides good resistance to chipping or flaking and extreme weather conditions. "I found out that this new line of paint uses UV-Protect Technology, which uses the same technology as automotive paint, so it won't fade in sunlight or dull over time," says Aldred.

- **Declutter your home with color**

Busy fall schedules often mean more school bags, homework, sports equipment, crafts and holiday decorations around the house. Aldred recommends quickly tackling a cluttered area of your home with a fresh paint job. For

example, if you have bookcases in your family room or glass-faced cabinets in your kitchen, Aldred suggests painting the backs of them in a standout color, like the PPG Timeless 2018 Color of the Year, Deep Onyx (00NN 07/000). "I love this trick because of how the eye is drawn to the color and not the clutter that might be around or behind it," says Aldred.

- **Transform your favorite gathering space with a fresh coat of paint**

Kitchens, living rooms and dining rooms are often favorite gathering spaces for friends and family in the home, so they are ideal spaces to make a great impression with a fresh coat of paint. "People always gravitate to our dining room when we are entertaining," says Aldred, "so I love to freshen the space each year with a new paint color. It's one of the least expensive and easiest ways to get a new look, and I love using a one-coat product to make it even easier." Aldred recently used PPG Timeless interior paint and primer in Bluegrass White (30GG 73/048) to update her dining room. For an on-trend look, she went with a flat finish. "Contrary to

popular opinion, a flat finish in a high-traffic entertaining space is durable if you select the right product," explains Aldred. With the paint's outstanding washability, scrubability and stain resistance, Aldred was sure it could withstand the wear and tear of countless social gatherings.

Perhaps it is time to embrace fall with a few fresh paint projects to impress your guests and make lasting improvements to your home. For more paint inspiration, visit Diy.PPG.com or www.TheCreativityExchange.com.

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Busy fall schedules often mean more school bags, homework, sports equipment, crafts and holiday decorations around the house. Aldred recommends quickly tackling a cluttered area of your home with a fresh paint job. For

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BPT Photo
Caulk around windows and doors - Air can also leak through minute cracks around windows and doors.

7 projects to help your home weather the winter safely and efficiently

(BPT) - If chilly temperatures make you want to snuggle under a blanket in front of a roaring fire, just think about your poor water pipes that can't escape the cold. You can't wrap your home in a warm, protective blanket when winter arrives, but a few winterization steps can help ensure your home weathers the winter safely and efficiently.

"Winterizing is definitely an important way to protect a home from the ravages of snow, ice and harsh temperatures, but it's also an opportunity to boost a home's energy efficiency," says Chris Williams, merchandising director at Lowe's. "Some of the easiest and most effective winterization projects can also contribute to energy savings throughout the year."

Here are seven projects to improve energy efficiency and prepare your home for winter:

Inside

- Protect pipes - Any plumbing pipes that run through uninsulated areas such as a crawl space or attic are at risk for freezing if temperatures plummet. Seal any cracks or openings where pipes exit the home, and fit unprotected pipes with pipe sleeves. Insulating pipes can reduce heat loss that makes your water heater work harder and use more energy, and raise the water temperature 2 to 4 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

- Add weather stripping to doors and windows - If your home is drafty, adding weather stripping to seal air leaks can reduce heating bills as

much as 20 percent, the DOE says. Identify places where air leaks occur in your home, and choose the right weather stripping for each area.

- Caulk around windows and doors - Air can also leak through minute cracks around windows and doors. Sealing such cracks with caulk further reduces the air leaks that make your furnace work harder and your home feel drafty.

- Add insulation - Insulation can make your home stay warmer in winter and cooler in summer, and help your heating and cooling systems work more efficiently. How much insulation your home needs depends on factors such as where you live, how old the home is and how well it was insulated to begin with. If you're unsure how much insulation your home needs, check out the Energy Star insulation guide.

Outside

- Protect outdoor plumbing - Whether you have an outdoor shower or a simple hose connection, it's important to protect outdoor plumbing from freezing. Water freezing in outdoor pipes can cause severe damage and costly water leaks. Turn off water flow to

outdoor pipes and flush the water from the system. Remove and store garden hoses for the winter. If you spot any cracks or problems, take care of them right away. Finally, add insulation, such as a hose bib cover to outdoor faucets.

- Prepare the lawn for winter - A healthy lawn requires less watering and work in spring than one that's been ravaged by winter's rigors. Keep grass mowed until it stops growing, and rake leaves and grass clippings to maximize sun exposure for grass. Mulch around plants and trees to protect them against harsh weather and freezing temperatures.

- Clean windows - Sunlight is a natural, cost-effective way to help keep your home warmer during winter. Opening drapes and blinds can maximize the amount of sun that enters a room and help warm it. However, dirty windows can reduce the amount of sunlight that gets through the glass. Plus, clean windows will help make your home feel brighter and lighter during the darkest days of winter.

For more energy-saving winterization ideas, visit www.lowes.com.

Bringing sustainability home is as easy as ABC

(BPT) - With 67 percent of consumers from across the globe preferring products from sustainable sources, according to a recent Nielsen survey, creating a more sustainable home is the new normal. From buying down and feather products to repairing leaky pipes, making your home more sustainable is as easy as the ABCs. Here are three small ways you can make a big difference (and spare your wallet) when it comes to the sustainability of our world:

A is for AUDIT

Do a home energy audit by checking your windows and doors for air leakage, and by checking your pipes - faucets, toilet flappers and valves - for any leaks.

Air leakage from windows and doors can impact your home's energy use. The United States Department of Energy claims sealing uncontrolled air leaks will save you 10 to 20 percent on your heating and cooling bills. Check your home for drafty windows and doors and discuss leak prevention options, such as weather strips and caulk, with your local hardware store.

Fixing leaky pipes can prevent gallons of water from being lost every day. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency states that tightening pipes and repairing leaks can prevent

the average household from leaking 10,000 gallons of water per year. These types of leaks are often easy to fix, which can save homeowners about 10 percent on their water bills.

B is for BEDDING

Changing your bedding to down and feather can help reduce your heating bill. Down and feather pillows, comforters, duvets and mattress toppers provide superior warmth, which in turn lets you lower the thermostat. You can save as much as 10 percent on your heating bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy, by lowering the thermostat by 10 to 15 degrees while you sleep.

Better yet, down and feathers are a natural by-product of the food industry. So recycling them into warm comforters means the down and feathers do not end up in our global landfills. Since down and feathers are a natural fill material, they have a lower carbon footprint than products made from synthetic fill materials. They are biodegradable and can be composted along with your food scraps or yard trimmings. Not to mention down and feather products are long-lasting with a lightweight feel, so you don't have to replace them as often.

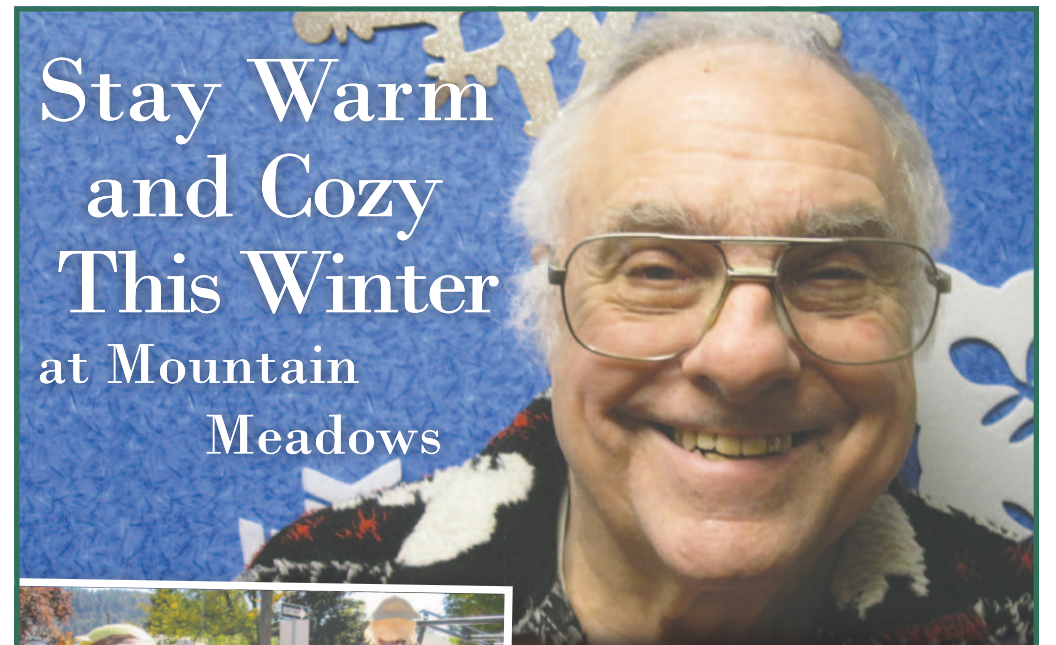
For more information about the sustainable benefits of

down and feather products, visit the American Down and Feather Council website at www.DownandFeatherCouncil.com.

C is for COMPOST

Composting is the practice of recycling decomposed organic material waste with manure to turn it into rich soil. By composting in your own backyard, nutrients are restored into the ground and less waste ends up in landfills, waterways and water treatment facilities. What's more: landfills cause organic waste to generate greenhouse gasses, so methane emissions are greatly reduced when waste is composted. This practice can also help you save money, since it allows you to purchase fewer soil conditioners and bagged manures for your property. By using down and feather, a byproduct of the food industry, along with creating your own compost by using vegetable scraps, you can make composting a core part of your lifestyle.

These simple steps make it easy to reduce the carbon footprint of your home, and contribute to the overall sustainability of our Earth. By following the ABCs and making these small changes in your everyday life, not only will you be doing something good for our planet, you'll be helping out your wallet as well!



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