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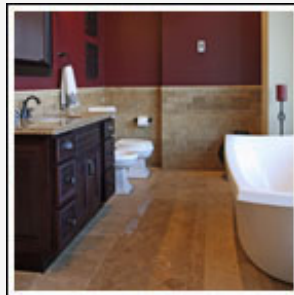


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Remodeling a Bathroom for an Aging Loved One

Bathrooms are full of hazards at the best of times – tile floors get slick, hands get scalded by over-zealous water heaters, and cabinet doors and countertops jut out at odd angles. According to the National Safety Council, **70 percent of accidents that occur in the home happen in the bathroom.** They can be especially dangerous if an older family member—particularly one in poor health—lives in the house. Accidents are much less likely to happen if you take the proper precautions; here are some tips to creating a safe, comfortable bathroom for an aging loved one.



Doorways and thresholds are the first thing to think about. Bathroom doorways in older homes are often only 24 inches wide while the standard wheelchair is 24 to 27 inches wide. So widening the doorway to the bathroom is a top priority. Thresholds are a tripping hazard in general, and maneuvering over them with a wheelchair, a walker, a cane or even with arthritis can be frustrating and dangerous. Remove them entirely for an even, safe entryway.

Showers and tubs can be tricky to manage for someone with health problems. A walk-in shower is the easiest way to make sure that the space is safe and easy to maneuver around in. If a walk-in shower is not possible, a shower with a wide, outward-opening door makes it possible to roll a chair right in. A built-in seat, grab bars and floors with a non-skid surface are also great safety additions. All of these options can be added without making a bathroom look or feel institutional.

Install a **fixed showerhead as well as a held-held one** for ease of use (and a great massage!). If you prefer a tub, consider one with either a transfer bench or a hinged walk-in door with a watertight seal. Both of these options offer a more secure way to use the tub instead of trying to clamber in over the side – and then trying to pull yourself out.

For someone in a wheelchair, **sinks, vanities and toilets** all present logistical issues. Comfort-height toilets are 2 to 3 inches taller than standard height toilets and are more comfortable for most adults, regardless of their age or level of disability – hence the name. Consider a pedestal or wall-mounted sink with no cabinetry below, which gives easier sink access for people in wheelchairs. Lowered vanities with leg room can also help, but keep in mind that these cut down on storage space.

The **storage space** dilemma is easily solved by installing lower cabinets and shelves. Shelves with bi-fold doors

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Winter Preparedness Tips

- **Winterize your home** to lower energy costs by insulating walls and attics, by ensuring solid caulking and weather-stripping around doors and windows, and by installing storm windows or covering windows with a plastic film layer that creates an extra air space.
- **Winterize your house, barn, shed or any other structure that may provide shelter** for your family, pets, livestock or sensitive equipment. Clear rain gutters of debris; repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on the house or other structure during a storm.
- **Insulate pipes** in crawl spaces or attic areas with insulation or newspapers and plastic.
- **Disconnect garden hoses.** All hose bibs (where hoses connect on the exterior of building) should utilize a *frost-free* design, which shuts off water *inside* the heated area of the building. However, for that design to work properly all hoses must be disconnected so that water can drain fully from the hose bib. Hoses should never be left connected to hose bibs during winter. If they are, you'll be calling us to replace cracked ones next spring.
- **Winterize sprinklers.** Be sure to have your sprinkler system – both underground zones and the brass vacuum breaker – blown out so they are clear of water, and also drain the interior line that supplies water to the sprinkler system.

put less stress on arthritic joints. Don't forget to lower the medicine cabinet and switch to faucets with levers instead of knobs for those with a limited range of motion.

Lighting is very important because vision deteriorates with age. Install bright lights in the bathroom. Consider lighting both over the vanity as well as in the ceiling, even in the shower ceiling. There are hundreds of designer options in lighting to keep your bathroom chic and well-lit.

Making even a few of these changes will give you a bathroom that's safer, more functional and more beautiful for you and your entire family.

If you have questions or would like more information call 720.468.3225 or email us at jim@amastershands.com

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Top Color Trends for 2012

The color trends for homes in 2012 are expected to reflect the attitude of homeowners in the United States. **As the economy continues to struggle, homeowners are looking for colors that will comfort and relax them, as well as sticking to a palette that may help the resale value of their home**, the Pantone Spring/Summer 2012 color trends forecast says.

Blue-gray color schemes are soothing and bring to mind calm waters and tranquil skies -- or, as noted in the Sherwin-Williams Colormix 2012 forecast, the treasured blue of denim. Brilliant blues will show up as accent walls or just to make individual rooms pop. There's speculation that **dignified neutral colors, such as beige and eggshell, will be popular**, providing a great surface to display artwork as well as give potential home buyers an empty canvas to envision their dream house.

The Sherwin-Williams Colormix 2012 forecast highlights 40 colors in four groups. Reds, blues, greens and neutrals dominate the palette. In the neutrals, the colors are inspired by raw materials, such as piles of pebbles and weathered wood, and textural elements, including linen and unfired porcelain.

The reds are deep, drawing inspiration from the earth's molten core, glowing embers and brilliant flowers. The greens showcase "the depths of the sea and forest," the forecast notes.

Rustic, earthy colors — red-browns and oranges — bring to mind a quiet countryside and farmland, images rooted in the natural rhythms of nature and growing seasons. In urban areas, the color trends may be a little brighter and bolder. Metallic and mirrored surfaces meant to reflect surrounding cityscapes and new technology will find their ways into apartments and townhouses.

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Wood Fireplace and Chimney Maintenance

Fireplace maintenance is easy, if a bit tedious. All you need to do to keep your fireplace clean is regularly sweep out the ashes (vacuum up the bits a broom or fireplace shovel won't catch). Then spray the surface with soapy water and scrub up the soot and stains with a wire or stiff-bristle brush.



- **Keep fire extinguishers on hand.** Mount them in key locations, such as garage, kitchen, basement or mechanical room, etc., and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. According to FEMA, house fires pose an additional risk during wintertime, when many people turn to alternate heating sources without always taking the necessary safety precautions.
- **Learn how to shut off water valves** (in case a pipe bursts, or you have a leak). Make sure everyone in the home knows where the main shutoff is located, and how to operate it.
- **Hire a quality contractor to assist with any of the above items, as needed.**

Quick Tips: Car Tip

If you see a gasoline tanker at your local gas station, you may want to choose a different time to fill your tank. When a station's underground tanks are being filled, the pressure from the hose can cause the sediment in the tank to be stirred up. This could end up in your tank if you fill up at the same time. This can clog your fuel filter and fuel injectors, which could cause damage over time.

Thanksgiving: Ancient and Modern

Rituals of thanks-giving for the fall harvest are found in many ancient cultures, including among the Greeks,



Romans and Egyptians, as well as Native Americans. The first "American Thanksgiving" may have been modeled, by the very pious Pilgrims, on the Biblical Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23), a week-long fall festival celebrating God's care for another group of pilgrims who endured much hardship on their way to the new "Promised Land." While modern American celebrations include quality time and feasting with family and friends, and prodigious quantities of football, it still remains a great time of offering thanks for all our blessings or benefits. In spite of the economy and a less-than-secure world situation, we are still a very blessed people.

Questions?

Chimney maintenance is a job for professionals, but there are still things you can do to make sure your chimney is in working order – if you're comfortable on a roof. (If not, hire a pro.) The chimney cap can become clogged with debris, so clean it out occasionally. Chimney caps also keep water out of your chimney as well as birds and other animals. The National Fire Protection Agency recommends a chimney inspection once a year, with cleaning and repairs done as needed prevent creosote build-up and the possibility of dangerous carbon monoxide poisoning.

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