

Ditch the Fridge in the Garage

IT'S CONVENIENT TO HAVE AN EXTRA REFRIGERATOR in the house for overflow food storage during holidays and parties—but the garage isn't necessarily the best place to put it.

Unless your garage is air conditioned or insulated, it gets awfully hot in there during the summer, and that can force the refrigerator to work overtime to keep the food cold. You'll see the cost of that hard work on your electric bill.

However, if you must keep a refrigerator in the garage, keep a few things in mind:

► It's not just the heat that stresses out a refrigerator in the garage: Manufacturers also advise against placing one in any space where the temperature dips below

55 degrees in the winter.

In an unheated garage, the fridge can actually warm up frozen food if the temperature dips below freezing.

► Have an electrician upgrade the electrical circuits in your garage before you plug in a refrigerator. If the appliance overtaxes the circuit and flips a breaker, you could wind up with a lot of smelly, spoiled food.

► Plug your refrigerator only into a grounded wall outlet.

► Avoid plugging the appliance into an outlet that's controlled by a switch. Someone could accidentally turn the switch off and cut power to the fridge.

► Clean a garage-based refrigerator more often than the one in the kitchen. The garage gets a lot dirtier than the house does, and older fridges often have looser seals.

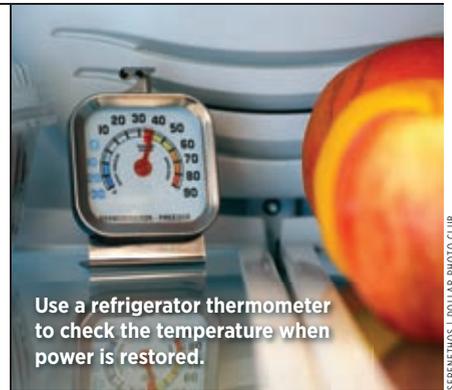
► Don't stack items



Extreme temperature changes, substandard circuits and extra dirt can make the garage a less-than-ideal place to put that old refrigerator.

around the refrigerator or lean anything against it. Like any appliance, it needs room to "breathe," or it won't operate efficiently.

► If your garage refrigerator used to be your kitchen refrigerator, it's probably pretty old and very inefficient. You're better off buying a small, new refrigerator and recycling the old one so you won't waste energy and unnecessarily run up your electric bill. Keeping that old fridge running in your garage for just a few cold drinks could cost you \$150 per year, or more, depending on its energy efficiency.



Use a refrigerator thermometer to check the temperature when power is restored.

SEBETHOS | DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB

Storm Headed Your Way?

Think about electricity

STORMS SEEM TO BE INCREASING in frequency and severity, and that can lead to more power outages.

To avoid disaster, plan your response to a sudden storm. Here are a few tips:

► If the power goes out, unplug all major electrical appliances and your expensive electronics. This could prevent an electrical surge from damaging them when the power is restored.

► Unplug basement appliances if you expect flooding.

► If water gets into the house, turn off the electricity to those areas before stepping into a wet room. Stepping in water—even just a puddle—that is touching plugged-in appliances can electrocute you.

► Before turning wet appliances back on, have an electrician inspect them.

► Keep the refrigerator door closed during a power outage. Food will stay good for four to six hours in an unopened refrigerator.

► Keep a refrigerator thermometer on hand to check the temperature when power is restored. If the temperature is still below 40 degrees, the food is safe to eat.

► Know where you can get dry ice if the power is off for more than four hours. Keep ready-to-eat, nonperishable food—and a manual can opener—on hand.

► If someone in the house is on a life-support system or relies on an electric medical device, make a plan for where to take the person if the power goes out.

Keep Safety First During Fall Chores

SUMMER'S OVER; SCHOOLS ARE OPEN; and it's time to prepare your house and lawn for fall and winter. The first thing to prepare: power tools and electrical cords—including extension cords—in the home, garage, shed and yard.

▶ Check that your power tools are designed for outdoor use and that there are no damages to the wires.

▶ Never carry a power tool by the wires or use it near water.

▶ Check to see that a tool is in good working condition before use. If it's not, don't repair it yourself. Have it repaired at a certified repair center or send it back to the manufacturer.

▶ Unplug electric tools and disconnect spark plug wires on gasoline-powered tools before making adjustments or clearing jams near moving parts.

▶ Be sure power tools are turned off and made inoperable if they must be left unattended, to prevent use by children.

▶ Always wear proper safety equipment and clothing (eye protection, long sleeves, etc.) for the task.

▶ Never use any accessory or power tool attachment except those specifically supplied or recommended by the manufacturer. They should be described in the tool's instruction manual.

And don't overlook extension cords. Some tips for safety:

▶ For outdoor jobs, use extension cords designed for outdoor use. They're thicker and more durable, and have connectors molded on them to prevent moisture damage.

▶ Do not plug one extension cord into another. Buy the proper length instead, but do not buy a longer cord than you need.

▶ Check the amperage rating of the extension cord to make sure it is high enough to meet the power demand of the tool you are using.

▶ Use three-wire extension cords



Before you do fall chores, prepare power tools and electrical cords—including extension cords—in the home, garage, shed and yard.

with three-pronged plugs. Never cut the third prong off of a power tool to make it fit a cord or plug.

▶ Push plugs fully into outlets to ensure a complete connection.

▶ Never leave an open extension cord plugged into an outlet. Unplug it when you're finished using it.

▶ Store extension cords in the garage so they won't be exposed to rain or cold weather.

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