

This article courtesy of

www.AptMags.com

apartment MANAGEMENT Magazines

DEAR MAINTENANCE MEN

Dear Maintenance Men:

I have a six-unit apartment building and need to recoat my decks and stairs. The problem is my stairs are in horrible shape and I am worried about their structural integrity. I need a little bit of guidance before I spend good money after bad. I'm not sure if I should repair or replace. Any help in how to evaluate my problem would be appreciated.

Jay

Dear Jay:

It sounds like your stairways are comprised of a wood structure with a Magnesite or fiberglass coating. Both Magnesite and fiberglass coatings can last for years if maintained properly. As you know, water intrusion can destroy a deck or stairway in no time. In order to evaluate a repair or replace dilemma, it is best to apply the "50/50 Rule" which states: "If a repair cost up to 50% of replacement it is always best to replace." This particular rule applies to most repairs. In other words, if the repairs cost almost as much as replacement; the old tired cliché of putting "lipstick on a pig" applies. You have poured a lot of resources into the old deck and you still have an old deck.

When the existing magnesite or wood staircases are beyond cost effective repair your best bet would be to go with a metal pre-cast stair system that have become "Cost Friendly" in recent years. These particular staircases and railings will last a very long time and can be repaired at approx. \$75 a step when damaged by refrigerators and dolly or other careless activity. The use of these staircases will not only upgrade the look of your building but also bring you into code compliance, make your insurance company happy and reduce your liability.

Dear Maintenance Men:

I have a very old 100 gallon water heater in need of replacement. I know who to call and what needs to be done; but, I can't speak the technical language to get exactly what I need. BTUs, rapid recovery and Nox emissions are all a foreign language to me. I want to ask intelligent questions and understand what the plumber or the technician is telling me. Can you go through some "Water Heater Speak" to help get through this?

Elaine

Dear Elaine:

We can relate; we have some of the same language issues with our computer tech! First, let's start with a few definitions:

Water Heater: A device for heating water for domestic use, usually supplied at a temperature in the range between 120°F and 140°F (approx. 50°C and 60°C). A water heater will both heat and store water.

Boiler: a domestic device burning solid fuel, gas, or oil, to provide hot water, esp for central heating. Water is not stored, but passes through the boiler & heated quickly. (Not typical in smaller buildings.)

Rapid Recovery Water Heater: Commercial water heater. Typically has a much larger burner to heat the water than a standard water heater. This water heater has a tank with many flues inside to aid in the heat transfer.

This article courtesy of

www.AptMags.com

apartment MANAGEMENT Magazines

Tankless Water Heater: This is like a mini-boiler. There is no water storage tank. The water is heated as the water passes through the heat exchanger.

BTU: A British Thermal Unit is used to measure the amount of heat required to rise the temperature of one pound of water by one degree Fahrenheit.

Anode: A zinc anode is a sacrificial rod to keep corrosion from attacking the water heater.

Clean Out Port: The port is used to clean out hard water deposits from the bottom of the tank. Usually found in 100 gal tanks.

T & P Valve: Relieves excess temperature & pressure from the tank. A water heater tank can explode without a properly functioning T&P valve.

Thermocouple: Is a safety device that monitors the pilot flame. Should the thermocouple not sense the pilot flame, it will shut off the gas.

Thermostat: a device that maintains a system at a constant temperature. It often consists of a bi-metallic strip that bends as it expands and contracts with temperature, thus breaking and making contact with an electrical power supply

Recirculation Pump: The pump moves hot water in a recirculation line to insure every unit in a building gets hot water on demand.

Low NOx Burners: A type of combustion technology used to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides. NOx forms when fuels are burned at high temperatures.

Additional info: A hundred gallon water heater rated at 77,000 BTU is a standard duty water heater with a 4" flue, suitable for buildings up to seven units. A rapid recovery water heater is considered a commercial heavy-duty water heater that is rated at 199,000 or more BTUs with a 6" flue or greater and is suitable for buildings eight units and above.

A rule of thumb to sizing a water heater is by multiplying 10,000 BTUs per apartment unit.

Dear Maintenance Men:

How do I get oil or grease stains out of a concrete parking area.

Bill

Dear Bill:

Go to your local grocery store and pick up the cheapest brand of cat litter you can find. Spread the cat litter over the oil stained concrete and grind it in with your shoes. Leave the litter in place for a minimum of an hour or best for 24 hours. Cat litter is an absorbent that helps draw out the oil or grease. If you have a large area to clean, you may want to go to a hardware store and purchase 50-pound bags of absorbent. The cost is often a little bit more than a regular sized bag of cat litter at the supermarket

This article courtesy of

www.AptMags.com

apartment

MANAGEMENT Magazines

Jerry L'Ecuyer

Jerry L'Ecuyer is the owner of **JLE Property Management, Inc. & Buffalo Maintenance, Inc.** and is a licensed contractor & real estate broker. He is currently on the Board of Directors, Chairman of the Education Committee & President of the Apartment Association of Orange County. Jerry has been involved with apartments as a professional since 1988 and can be reached at (714) 778-0480 or jerry@JLEI.com.

Frank Alvarez

Frank Alvarez is the Operations Director for **Buffalo Maintenance, Inc.** He has been involved with apartment maintenance & construction for over 18 years. He is also a lecturer & educational instructor. Frank can be reached at (714) 956-8371 Frankie@JLEI.com. Please view our web sites at: www.JLEI.com & www.BuffaloMaintenance.com

Dear Readers: We need more maintenance questions! If you have a maintenance question you want to see answered in the "Dear Maintenance Men:" column, please send us a note by email, fax or telephone. E-mail: maintenance@JLEI.com Telephone: 714 778-0480, Fax: 714 491-0864. Thank you