

## Your Garage is Valuable Real Estate

A garage may keep your vehicles safe from the elements, but for many families, garages do much more. A garage may double as a workshop, storage space, sports equipment room, appliance annex, craft or hobby area, or be put to use for any number of other creative purposes. This multi-function space needs to be maintained with the same care as the rest of the home, to make sure it continues to serve many functions.



In recent years, new home construction has produced homes of large square footage and more ornate design. Similarly, the look of garages has changed along with changes in home exteriors. Emphasis has been placed on attractive outer facades for garages, in turn leading to changes in garage door materials and construction.



Some homeowners prefer a wooden door to match the look of their home, and to make a visual statement. It must be remembered, however, that while wooden doors can be stunning, they require maintenance, especially in a home that faces a westerly direction. Wood is also a considerably more expensive option. In a home where the

garage door is less visible, steel may make the most economic sense because it is less expensive to purchase and also provides better insulation.

Garage door openers also need regular maintenance for the safety of all users. All garage door openers manufactured after 1993 are required to be outfitted with an external entrapment protection system. However, the Consumer Protection Safety Commission (CPSC) cautions that not all devices that open and close garage doors are necessarily safe, especially those manufactured prior to 1982. The CPSC recommends that homeowners inspect garage doors and operation of the door opener regularly to verify that the system functions properly. They also suggest hardware and fittings be checked to keep the door on track at all times.

The garage's interior needs maintenance, starting with the floor. A concrete floor is prone to deterioration from chemicals and fluid spills. Concrete sealer can be applied to protect the concrete and make the surface easier to sweep and keep clean. Sealers can be applied safely by homeowners when using proper ventilation and equipment. In other cases, professionals can perform the service.



Some garages may be prone to water leaks. If water is seeping into a garage regularly, causes can range from an improperly graded driveway to lack of weather stripping at the base of the garage door. To check for leaks, homeowners can shut the garage door and spray the door with a garden hose. This process may indicate where water leakage is occurring. Weather stripping also will reduce the amount of cold or hot air that leaks into the garage. If the garage is attached to the house, a properly insulated door leading to the house is vital to maintain energy efficiency. It is important to make sure adequate weather stripping also is installed on this door, as well.



Just as in your home, a garage with one or more windows is susceptible to air leaks. There are several simple methods for checking for these leaks, by either rattling the window (if a window moves, there may be a leak) or visually inspecting the windows. Simple leaks usually can be sealed through the use of caulking or weather stripping.

Moving up the garage walls to the roof, a visual examination of the garage ceiling may tell a story. Ceiling stains indicate past water leakage. If any stains appear, a closer examination is always a good idea, with special attention paid to roof pitch and adequate drainage.

As some experts have pointed out, parking a car in a garage after it has been exposed to the elements all day is like parking a quarter-ton heater or ice cube next to the home. Good insulation can help with utility bills and, as you know, a well-maintained garage can add increased value to a home.