

Homeowner's Guide USA
In Resident-Contractor Relations 2020
We May Need To Postpone Some Plans

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***References Appear At End Of This Guide**

Preview

It is certainly that time of year to really start getting a few extra things accomplished towards maintaining and improving our home. Covid-19 or not, there are some who are very stubborn about this ‘abnormal’ phase of existence.

What? Home confinement? No non-essential outdoor excursions? No outdoor barbeques? Yes. These are very restrictive times. Still there remains the ever-present threat for being overcome by the virus. It is very difficult to enforce self-confinement in our home and yard for as long as it takes for a vaccine to be available – much more – where we live. But if we decide to go forward because medicine does not appear moving fast enough to develop an effective, long-term anti-body against Covid-19, we may want to re-think that and, instead remain diligent about social-distancing. This is notably true, under the circumstances, using contractors for non-critical home projects.

Non-critical home projects are those which *can wait*. If our roof is not caving in, we may want to indefinitely postpone plans we may have had for replacing it this year. We can opt to reschedule implementation for the same time in 2021. The same for our paving stone, driveways, kitchen cabinets, interior design, new furniture, etc. In the usual scenario, we have done quite well living with these for perhaps a while. We can sacrifice the year delay staying as much on the safe side as possible. Our bottom line is to *minimize exposure* through *minimizing the number of different people* visiting our home. Regretfully – building trades personnel [such as contractors] are included.

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Indeed many of us are restless, but it may be helpful to remember the influenza pandemic of 1918.

Pandemic 1918 - 1920

The flu pandemic is universally regarded as one of the *worst pandemics in human history*.

Since this is well-documented in one of the most reputable online reference sources in the world, Wikipedia, we may as well go with a revealing excerpt about this horrible moment in time:

The Spanish flu, also known as the *1918 flu pandemic*, was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic. Lasting almost 36 months from January 1918 to December 1920, it infected 500 million people – about a third of the world's population at the time. The death toll is estimated to have been anywhere from 17 million to 50 million, and possibly as high as 100 million, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in human history.

This is mentioned because the event is most relative to the times. However, it was mis-named since there is no evidence linking *Spain* to its origination [ref. Wikipedia at bottom of this guide]. Nevertheless, on a global scale, this tragic situation lasted for well over 2 years. However, in the U.S, the number of people stricken declined low enough to graduate into a sense of *normalcy* by 1919 – but not until after it claimed in the area of 675,000 American lives.

Underlying Significance

We can first consider the root to spread of viral disease. In this case: carriers. Most specifically, people who have it. Viruses of this nature do not originate in the air. Instead, they become airborne via infected people. Although those infected can transfer it to surfaces [door knobs, tabletops, etc.], what we are up against is primarily most detrimental through people releasing it within range of our breathing.

Since the incidence of Covid-19 is so high, there is a relative risk for a number of others contracting it. Infections are not on a decrease. If we do not have it, our risks heighten towards being exposed the more diversified the selection of people we are in social contact with. Subsequently, when we carry on business as we have this time last year, especially when interviewing building trades personnel, we increase the risk of interviewing someone who has it. If by our misfortune, we also do, our situation can be compounded enough for us not be able to recover.

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We May Have To Postpone

In either case, we may want to postpone contractor-required projects which are fundamentally *cosmetic*. Among these usually are:

Painting

Driveway re-paving

Replacement of functional cabinetry

Bath area refurbishment/design

Pool installation or cleaning

Carpet replacement

Planned Interior/Exterior Decorations

Door-hang

Non-critical Appliance Deliveries/Installations

New Furniture Deliveries/Setups

Anything which is not realistically needed. Whatever we can do without needlessly jeopardizing ourselves. It is highly plausible that when we minimize the number of different contractors we are exposed to, we minimize the risk.

If we made a list of all the things we have on-agenda which requires reliable contractor assist, we may very well find that we can afford to strike-out most. At least until perhaps 2021. We will very probably be here at that time, also. More than likely.

This does not mean all hope is gone. After all, there are some projects earmarked for contractors which we can, instead, do ourselves.

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What Can We *Personally* Do?

Realistically, the essential home services of contractors cannot be understated. There are just some projects better left to them. But we may want to always use responsible protocol to ensure our decision is based more on documented evidence of their reliability rather than on their presentations, alone. Presentations like un-validated word-of-mouth are not representative of their actual performance rating and reliability. One other thing, such overtures do not reveal if whether or not they can be a health danger to our entire family. Respectively, we can do exceedingly well implementing safety measures to protect the well-being of ourselves and property from detrimental individuals in the building trades.

In the meantime, since the number of Covid-19 confirmed cases *continues to rise*, the risk of infection or compounded infection becomes greater. Accordingly, as stressed earlier in this guide [but differently], we may want to daily inventory our options for drastically reducing contact with an assortment of contractors. This is particularly so when there are home projects we can tackle which we will have otherwise delegated to them. These can be designated as *not critical enough for service call*. They are now re-assigned as *DIY*.

Among These:

- Toilet and Sink Replace
- Trouble-Shoot Garbage Disposal Unit
- General Plumbing i.e. leaking faucets, pipes beneath kitchen sinks [related ‘clutter – remediation’ which blocks them and can discourage us from *going down there*]
- Light Switch Replace [following proper DIY etiquette – Links for these at bottom of this guide]
- Door Replace [best done by two household members]
- Paving Stone Replace/Adjust/Install [avoid signing for deliveries at door, when possible. Use our own pen or tissue if offered an electronic one linked to tablet for signature. [Avoid handling the clipboard or tablet. Very likely multiple people have. Dispose of tissue immediately. Sanitize hands – not just fingers.]
- Washer/Dryer Trouble-Shoot [May require 2 household members depending on model]

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There are loads of home items normally delegated to building trades personnel which we can do on our days off. If we are retired, then to whichever days we choose. Most important, of course, is to get them done. This is an effective strategy for drastically cutting back on the flow of traffic entailed using multiple contractors.

Summary

We can continue to approach the matter for taking Covid-19 very seriously by postponing most projects for which we will have otherwise required experienced intervention. Although we may not have the ability to do a lot of our projects without contractors – we can learn. They did. Our advantage is that we have learning ability. Our benefit is that we can still make enormous contributions to our home maintenance and improvement objectives during these very challenging times. In short, we do not have to postpone EVERYTHING. Do we?

There is something which can escape us about the demise of the flu epidemic in the U.S. There was *no vaccine*. It did not just disappear. But it was enormously defeated through all the unfortunate deaths (675,000), related burials, self-quarantine of those who had it, and of those who did not. What also factored into this was the heightened level of cleanliness, including routine, discreet social-distancing. Lots of sanitizing of surfaces.

It is ironic that since the Covid-19 outbreak in the U.S., although the number of confirmed cases and deaths *continue* to rise, the *rate* of newly occurring cases has decreased. Further, the *rate* has decreased for the same reasons as with the flu epidemic in our country (1918-1919). Likewise, can it continue to do so as *we continue* our diligence doing exactly what we have, especially in carefully regulated social distancing and *outrageously* elevated concerns for cleanliness. Minimizing our contractor contact through postponing projects, but diving into effective DIY practices, instead – can help immeasurably!

HOME IS THE BEST WONDER OF THE WORLD!

**Edited with special assistance from D. Madden*

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Helpful References

This Old House – Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/user/thisoldhouse>

Bob Vila – [Also Among Home Improve DIY Royalty] - Videos

<https://www.bobvila.com/projects>

Matt Risinger – Master Builder – DIY Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/user/MattRisinger>

Family Handyman - 100 Home Repairs - DIY

<https://www.familyhandyman.com/smart-homeowner/100-home-repairs-you-can-do-yourself/>

CDC – Indicates - Isolation Of Infected – Death - Cleanliness – Discreet Social Behavior - Defeated U.S. 1918-1919 Flu Epidemic.

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-commemoration/pandemic-timeline-1918.htm>

Pandemic 1918

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_flu

History – Website – Result Of Letting Guard Down

If San Francisco had kept all of its anti-flu protections in place through the spring of 1919, it could have reduced deaths by 90 percent.

<https://www.history.com/news/spanish-flu-pandemic-response-cities>

National Institute Of Health - 2007

“In San Francisco, which they found to have the most effective measures, they estimate that deaths would have been 25 percent higher had city officials not implemented their interventions when they did. But had San Francisco left its controls in place continuously from September 1918 through May 1919, the analysis suggests, the city might have reduced deaths by more than 90 percent.”

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/rapid-response-was-crucial-containing-1918-flu-pandemic>

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