

YOUR HOME

OCTOBER
2009

TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

UNDER LOCK AND KEY



While many homeowners say home security is a priority, they may not be taking the necessary precautions with their keys and locks. A recent survey by Kwikset, which manufactures locks and hardware for residential homes, finds that 47 percent of homeowners did not change or re-key their locks when they first moved in to their home, and nearly one-third have *never* changed or rekeyed their locks. More than half

of homeowners surveyed also say they routinely loan house keys to friends or contractors, increasing the chance that the keys could fall into the wrong hands and be copied.

Home security experts at American Lock and Key offer several tips to help you secure access to your home.

- Don't hide keys in obvious places, such as under an exterior floor mat or a planter. Most burglars know the most common places to hide keys. If you must hide them, keep keys stored in a secured key box.
- Keep keys separate from your address, so if they are ever lost or stolen, no one can identify where they belong.
- Immediately change or re-key the locks when you move to a new home. A locksmith may charge \$40 to \$100 or more to re-key locks or, if you prefer to do it yourself, re-key kits are available at hardware stores for less than \$20.
- Keep garage doors secure, especially those that connect to the house from inside the garage and doors leading to the garage from outside. Use a padlock to secure the inside of the garage door.
- Keep windows locked, especially on the home's lower level where they can be an attractive target for criminals.

HOME DESIGN TURNOFFS

Before putting your home up for sale, it pays to take a good look around. Is your home décor out of date? Will it appeal to prospective buyers, or send them running out the door?

Barbara Ballinger, architecture coach and columnist for the *Style, Staged and Sold* blog, says that while vintage features may appeal to some buyers, they could cost you a sale. Here are a few designs that could turn off potential buyers.

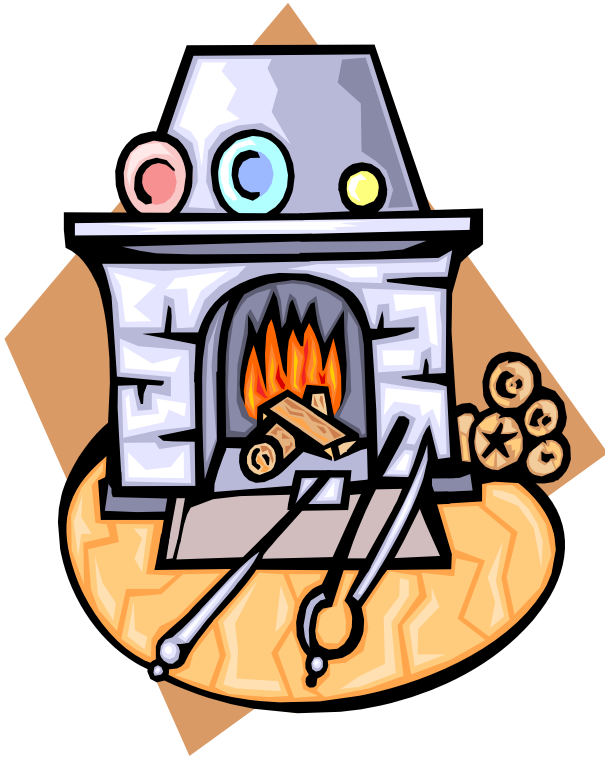
- Excessively bold or dark paint or tile colors, such as deep plum or jet black
- Walls painted with lacquered or high-gloss finish, faux- and sponge-painted walls, and wallpaper
- Worn, cracked laminate countertops and backsplashes
- Outdated bathrooms with small sinks, short toilets, squat bathtubs and tight shower spaces
- Stained and worn wall-to-wall carpet or worn linoleum
- Bedrooms decorated with a theme that is incorporated through the carpeting, walls, ceilings, light fixtures and furnishings
- Too many mirrored walls, ceilings and doors in a single room
- Ceilings with too many recessed lighting spots



fast fact >> >> >> >> >> >> >>

As of mid September 2009, 1.4 million homebuyers have taken advantage of the \$8,000 first-time homebuyer tax credit.

Source: www.irs.gov



USE HEAT SOURCES WISELY

In response to rising energy costs, some homeowners are using alternate sources to heat their homes. While wood-burning stoves, space heaters and fireplaces are popular options, especially in colder climates, they can be fire hazards. In preparation for Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 4 – 10, 2009, FireSafety.gov offers some tips to help homeowners use these heat alternatives safely.

Wood stoves made of plate steel or cast iron are best. Use only seasoned wood for fuel, and avoid green wood, artificial logs or trash. Inspect and clean the pipes and chimneys annually, and check monthly for damage and obstructions. Keep combustible objects at least three feet away from the stove.

Space heaters that feature the Underwriter Laboratory certification are recommended. Use a heater with a thermostat control mechanism that can switch off automatically if the heater falls over. Don't dry clothes or store objects on top of the heater. Like wood stoves, keep combustibles at least three feet away. Always unplug the device when it is not in use.

Clean fireplaces frequently to prevent creosote from building up in the chimney. Also inspect the chimneys for obstructions or cracks. Never burn trash, paper or green wood, which can cause heavy creosote buildup. Don't wear loose-fitting clothes near open flames, and make sure the fire is completely out before leaving the house or going to bed.

Finally, make sure smoke detectors are working properly, and replace batteries every six months.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Of the 1.5 million fires that took place in 2008, 403,000 (27 percent) occurred in residential properties.

Source: National Fire Protection Association



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