

SPRING CLEAN-UP SAFETY

It's time to shed the heavy coat and boots and clean up to receive blessings of spring! Safety always comes first, so make plans ahead to time and think about how you are going to clean up before diving into projects. That would reduce likelihood of accidents and injuries.

Indoors:

A tidy well-organized home makes cleaning easier and helps prevent fires and injuries. To stay on top of clutter:

OPEN WINDOWS AND DOORS AND AERATE THE HOUSE OFTEN.

Indoor air gets stagnant and unhealthy if you don't aerate the house regularly. Check the weather for wind direction and speeds, dust and pollen counts daily so that you can judge when is a good time to do so.

Wear long sleeve shirt, gloves and eye protection when you clean. Store all cleaning products away from heat, direct sun and out of reach of children and pets. Consider storing cleaning products in a locked storage cabinet.

Recycle old newspapers, magazines and boxes.

-**sort everything**---newspapers, junk mail, envelopes with clear plastic window, printed papers and magazines can be recycled and mixed in a bin. Do not mix with manila folders/envelops, thin and heavily printed cardboard box of cereal, snack, six-pack holders and case of beers. These materials do not have enough fiber left, and heavy printing ink contaminates batches.

-**cut open and flatten** the cardboard boxes and remove plastic pockets of instructions, shock-absorbing materials like sponges and stylofoam inside.

-if you are not taking them to recycle right away, make sure to store tidied up, in a protected area.

Empty wastebaskets and trash cans on a regular basis. Disinfect and deodorize with bleach solution (fill it up to cover the bottom quarter with cold tap water and add one table spoonful or a capful of bleach). Leave it 4-5 hours or overnight. Drain the water in a sink and dry in sun before using it again. If you left it alone overnight and didn't use more than a spoonful in about a gallon of water, you can water plants with it.

Keep work areas free from dust. Dust and shavings pose a fire and health hazard. Wear eye protection and use bandana (but go for N95 respirator if you are allergic to dust and/or see mouse droppings and nests—see what to do with mouse habitat clean up below) to cover your mouth and nose. Sweep up or vacuum shavings or sawdust from workshop and garage areas. Change the bag in your vacuum cleaner regularly.

Exercise caution when using household cleaning supplies. Read all instructions on labels and avoid mixing different cleaning agents, because toxic fumes could result. Best thing for the household with children and pets is to stop using those products. Most everything can be cleaned using lukewarm water, wet the area first, wait for few minutes to dissolve the gunk, and wipe off clean with a clean rag. Add little soap and/or

baking soda for tough spots. If scouring powder is desired, choose one that's free of dye, perfumes, and other chemicals. Water your trees with dirty soap/baking soda water. These won't hurt the tree but many household chemicals do.

BEFORE THROWING THINGS AWAY: Consider donating items in a working condition and still nice, such as clean used clothes, furniture, toys, knick-knacks and/or electronics.

Here is a list of local thrift shops and their schedules for drop-offs.

[Salvation Army Thrift Store](#)

201 North Pinon Drive, Cortez (970) 564-4228 (M-F 10-5 Sat 10-4)

Drop Off Time: 9-4 Mon-Sat.

[Methodist Thrift Shop](#)

444 East Main Street, Cortez (970) 565-7369 (M-S 10-4)

Drop Off Time: 9-5 Mon-Sat.

In the workshop:

Springtime also brings out amateur woodworkers. When working on a refinishing project using chemical strippers, take special precautions. Be aware that these products are flammable and/or hazardous to your health.

Use only products that are marketed as paint or varnish strippers. **Read and follow all label instructions** and work in a well ventilated area.

Wear chemical resistant gloves that are appropriate to the product that is being used. Ordinary latex kitchen gloves do not provide the protection needed for these chemicals. Always wash hands after using, even when wearing protective gloves.

Wear protective goggles as these chemicals can cause serious, even permanent, damage to the eyes.

Avoid working near any open flame and don't smoke. An explosion could result. Chemical soaked rags and any remaining chemicals will need to be disposed of separately from household trash. Contact your government for the location of the nearest household hazardous waste disposal facility.

Outdoors:

Power equipment can make outdoors chores easier, but also more risky. Each year mishaps involving lawn mowers send thousands of people to emergency rooms. Whether you're using a riding lawn mower or a walk-behind mower, always read the operating instructions before starting. Never disable any of the machine's safety features.

Know how to stop the machine quickly. Make sure that the blade-stopping feature is working properly. Never leave a running mower unattended.

Clear the area you're going to mow before you begin. Walk around the area and pick up any toys, branches or rocks. The high speed of the mower's or trimmer's blade produces a vacuuming action that draws grass up to be cut. This action can also pick up debris and throw it out of the discharge area with considerable force. Children should be kept away from the area when you're mowing.

Never allow children to operate a mower, whether it is a walk-behind or riding mower. Manufacturers recommend that only mature adolescents should operate a mower and then only under adult supervision.

Wear the appropriate clothing when mowing or trimming grass. Always wear sturdy footwear. Long trousers should be worn even in summer weather. Be aware that loose clothing and jewelry may get caught in moving parts and lead to serious injury. Eye and ear protection are recommended.

Use caution when mowing on slopes. When using a walk-behind mower mow across the face of the slope; when using a riding mower always mow up and down - never across - on slopes over 5 degrees. This reduces the risk of tipover or loss of control. If you have concerns about tipping or losing control on a slope, stay off and don't mow.

Use extra care when re-fueling your machine. Use only the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. To avoid fire, the engine should be turned off and cool before re-fueling. Re-fuel your machine outdoors. Clean up any spilled gasoline immediately.

Brush cutters and chainsaws are also increasing in popularity. These blades are sharp and, because of the nature of items being cut, can be unpredictable. **Only mature and experienced adults should operate** these tools. As with any power tool, read and follow all operating instructions.

Choose the right size chainsaw for the types of jobs you do. The most popular size for household use is between 8" and 20". Any saw with a blade length longer than 20" should only be used by professionals. The saw should feel balanced and comfortable for the operator.

Electric saws are becoming more popular for household use. **Be sure that the power source is grounded** and adequate to power the saw.

If using a fuel powered saw make sure that the proper fuel mixture is used. **Never re-fuel while the engine is running** or the machine is hot. Never rest or attempt to re-start a saw on your leg or knee.

Keep your saw in proper working order. Make sure the chain is sharpened and the tension is properly adjusted.

About ladders:

Indoors and out, ladders play a major role in any spring cleaning job. Every year thousands of people are injured in falls involving ladders. Make sure yours is up to the task.

Before using your ladder, inspect it for any loose or damaged hinges, steps or braces.

Select the proper ladder for the job. Make sure it's long enough and sturdy enough for its intended purpose. Be aware of power lines when using metal ladders. Metal is a prime conductor of electricity and you can be killed by touching a ladder that has come in contact with power lines.

Place the ladder on a solid, level surface. If using outdoors on soft ground, spread planks under the ladder's legs.

Face the ladder and use both hands when climbing or descending. Try not to lean too far to either side — a good measure is to keep your belt buckle between the two rails. If you need tools for the job, either wear them in a tool belt, put them in your pockets, or

use a bucket and rope to haul them up. Use a spotter when possible to help steady the ladder.

It's always good to work with a buddy; if possible, avoid going up on roof and trees, using mechanized tools when you are alone. Take turns with your family and/or friends to share the cleaning at each other's property.

Happy Spring Clean Up!