Septic System 101 – Maintaining Your Septic System - The participant will learn the proper maintenance of a septic system, alternative septic systems permitted in Buncombe County, the permitting process, etc. Buncombe County Environmental Health will assist with the workshop. The workshop will be held Thursday, September 6 at 6:30 pm. Space is limited so pre-registration is necessary.

Private Wells 101 – Protecting Your Water Supply – Participants will learn how to protect their wells from contamination, the new permitting rules, construction, etc. Buncombe County Environmental Health will assist with this workshop. The workshop will be held Tuesday, September 11 at 6:30 pm. Space is limited so pre-registration is necessary.

Noonliting: Moving Towards a Healthier You - It may seem early to be thinking about the winter holidays, but in order to be prepared to avoid the weight gain that comes with the holidays and the slowing down during the colder months Noonliting: Moving Towards a Healthier You, a weight management class, is beginning in September. This 10-week program will meet on Mondays from 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm beginning September 10 through November 19. Preregistration is required and there is a fee of $20 for materials.

Basic Home Maintenance Course – Have you wanted to make those basic home repairs but didn’t know where to start? The Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center is offering a five-series Basic Home Maintenance Course beginning Thursday, September 27 from 5:30-7:30 pm. Remaining dates for the course are: October 2, 4, 9 and 11. Some of the topics to be covered are: saving on your heating and cooling bills, basic plumbing repairs, interior and exterior maintenance, landscaping and lawn care, indoor air quality, common household pest, etc. The course also offers "hands-on" activities that include repairing: leaking faucets, damaged drywall, and replacing window screens. The fee of $20 includes all materials. Space is limited so pre-registration is necessary.

Saving on Your Utility Bill – You Can Do It! Are you looking for ways to reduce your monthly utility bills? Let this free energy saving workshop show you how. The workshop will show homeowners where they can make changes in and around their homes to reduce their energy consumption. The low-cost or no-cost methods will be easy for any participant to do, save money, and be more comfortable during the upcoming cold weather. The workshop will be offered at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, October 16. The workshop is free, space is limited so pre-registration is necessary.

All of the above workshops will be held at the North Carolina Cooperative Extension – Buncombe County Center, 94 Coxe Avenue. For more information or to register for any of the workshops call 255-5522.
September: National Preparedness Month

A disaster can affect your home and family at any time. It could be a house fire, hazardous chemical spill on a nearby interstate or flooding from a passing hurricane. Would your family be prepared if a disaster occurred tomorrow? September is a good time to evaluate how prepared you are and review your disaster plan.

To be ready for a disaster you will need to stock the basics: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, emergency supplies and tools, and special need items. Water is the most important item. A normally active person needs to drink at least 2 quarts a day. Store a minimum of 1 gallon of water per person per day (2 quarts for drinking, and 2 quarts for food preparation, washing dishes, and bathing) - more if there is storage space. Keep at least a 3-day supply of water for each person in the household. To keep stored water fresh, change it every 6 months.

Keep a 2-week supply of non-perishable food at home in case of a disaster. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. Buy the size container that can be used in one meal and make sure they are foods your family likes.

Your family may not all be together when a disaster occurs. Have an individual outside the area that all family members can contact should you be separated. Be sure the person is aware of being your family's contact and all family members know the number.

Even if you do not need family records during an evacuation, they must be protected. Records are difficult to replace and may delay insurance claims or other important matters. You will need information about income, debts, insurance, and other financial data to apply for certain types of assistance. Keep these records in a waterproof, fireproof, and portable container.

If your neighborhood has an elderly individual living alone you may want to guide them in making preparations in advance. They will need to know someone will assist them in evacuating should it become necessary.

Back to School Lunch Ideas

It is back to school time and many of us are faced with helping our children decide what to eat for lunch. Whether you pack the lunch or they choose from the school cafeteria, it is important to talk with your children about eating a balanced lunch. A balanced lunch includes a variety of proteins, vegetables and fruits and whole grains. Let them know that it will help them grow strong, give them energy and help them do well in class.

Have different choices on hand from cheese, beans, low fat meats or nut butters to whole grain breads, crackers or chips. Add in cut carrots, fresh fruit or other vegetables when packing a lunch. Use an ice pack to keep cheeses and yogurt cold or freeze small juice boxes to stick in an insulated lunch bag. These can make a healthy lunch for you as well.

If your child likes the school lunch, sit down and choose from the lunch menus that the school districts provide. They are sent home or available on the school’s website. Remember to encourage a variety of foods and start with the days that they are serving vegetables your child likes. Even pizza can be part of a healthy meal if lower fat vegetables are included and it isn’t the choice everyday. Discourage your child from choosing only from the á la carte items and extras that are sold on the side. When these are the only choice, the meal usually doesn’t end up balanced in the nutrients they need.

How Long Are Home Canned Foods Safe?

Every year as the canning season is here, many people notice that as they put up the new canned beans or other foods, that they still have a can or two or three or… from other years. You may wonder how long these foods last and when do you need to discard them. The answer is that as long as you canned them correctly using a research-based method, those foods should be safe to eat. The nutrition quality and flavor is best if used within a year to 18 months. The best advice is to can what you will use within this time frame to avoid having excess from year to year.
Appliances Use Energy—Even When They’re Off

The average American home is brimming with consumer electronics and appliances – televisions, DVD players, stereos, and kitchen gadgets – the list goes on. All of these appliances are great to have when you need them, but they can add to your power bill even when they are turned off. These types of appliances can account for 15% of your power bill, and up to 40% of the energy they require is used when they are not running. Called “phantom” energy use, the power clocks display, remote controls, and other features use in the Off mode can really add up.

While altering the energy requirements of existing appliances is not possible, using consumer electronics mindfully or replacing them with energy efficient models will significantly reduce the amount of energy they require. Following are several ways to reduce the energy consumption of existing appliances:

- Unplug chargers for cell phones and other electronics when the equipment is fully charged.
- Use a power strip as a central power supply for computers and peripheral equipment, video games, and other electronics. Turn off the power strip when the equipment is not in use.
- Enable power management features on your computer, monitor, and other office equipment.
- Avoid using a screen saver on your computer’s monitor; allow the monitor to switch to Sleep Mode or turn it off when not in use.

When it is time to replace an appliance, look for the Energy Star logo. Energy Star is a joint program of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U. S. Department of Energy. Appliances and other household goods (such as light bulbs) bearing this logo have been designed to meet strict standards for energy efficiency.

Maintaining Your Septic System

For many homeowners a septic system can be confusing and many times a mystery. The important thing to remember is a septic system consists of three main parts:

1. The septic tank collects and stores the solids that come from the house.
2. The drainfield is made from pipes and gravel that are installed as trenches in the soil. The drainfield delivers wastewater to the soil.
3. The soil beneath the drainfield purifies the wastewater before it flows to the underlying groundwater.

Wastewater flows from the house into the septic tank. The solids sink to the bottom of the tank, the grease floats to the top, and the liquid portion of the wastewater flows out into the drainfield. The drainfield distributes the wastewater and allows it to slowly move into the soil where it is purified by organisms that live in the soil.

Knowing how to properly maintain your system can reduce the possibility of failure as well as preventing well water from becoming contaminated. If you use a septic system for your waste disposal and need a better understanding of the system, plan to attend the workshop on September 6. Just remember to call our office to pre-register.

Time is Running Out

The 2005 Energy Policy Act qualifies homeowners for a tax credit that encourages energy-efficient improvements to a home’s exterior (windows, doors, insulation) and to its heating, air conditioning, and ventilation (HVAC) and water heating equipment. Qualifying measures must be applied to the homeowner’s main home in the United States between January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2007. This one-time program offers homeowners up to a 10% credit or $500 for the two years combined.
Let's Face It...Being a Caregiver is Difficult

Caring for someone with a chronic illness such as dementia, heart disease, Parkinson’s disease or stroke can be stressful physically, emotionally and financially. It is important to take care of yourself so that you can better take care of those you love. Caregivers need to learn how to:

• reduce stress
• improve self-confidence
• better communicate their feelings
• balance their life
• increase their ability to make tough decisions
• locate helpful resources.

As caregivers we tend to put ourselves last, so find out the best ways to take care of ourselves by joining Cooperative Extension and Land-of-Sky Regional Council of Governments for Powerful Tools for You, a program designed to provide caregivers with the tools they need to take care of themselves. To register call Land-of-Sky Regional Council of Governments at 251-6622. The program will be held on Wednesdays from September 12 through October 17 from 9:30 am to 12:00 noon at Land-of-Sky, 25 Heritage Drive.

• For additional articles and workshop announcements during the month, check out Nancy's new blog at: http://onhomefront.blogspot.com/

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Individuals with disabilities who would like to participate in any program mentioned in newsletter, but who need special assistance to do so, should call the Extension Center at 828-255-5522 at least five days prior to the event.

On the Home Front is a newsletter produced by the Family and Consumer Sciences Agents in Buncombe County. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform and educate Buncombe County residents on workshops and issues that affect them, and to provide ideas for helping improve their quality of life.

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Check out Buncombe County Center’s website at...http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu