

Appliance Repair Show Transcript—June 17, 2007

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2007 Frigidaire 12,000 BTU Air Conditioner Question Regarding Constant Usage

JOHN MCCULLOCH

John Sowden is the star of the show here and he's going to answer a question from Jackie, in Madison Heights, here on the Appliance Repair Show. Go ahead, Jackie.

JACKIE

I've had this question for many years and have had differing opinions on it and I hope John can clear this up for me.

JOHN SOWDEN

Well I'll give you my opinion and we'll see if it differs.

JACKIE

Well, I trust you, John. You've been giving everybody some great advice today. I have a brand new [Frigidaire 12,000 window air conditioner](#). And I want to know, [are these units designed to run 24 hours a day](#) or should you give them breaks in between?

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, I'd say that 24 hours a day would mean you'd run them at night, and a lot of times the outside temperature drops below seventy degrees, and if you force it to run, it's possible that you could freeze the coil over on the inside of the house, the evaporator coil.

JACKIE

Okay, the reason why I asked about the 24 hours is it does help my allergies, my husband has asthma it does seem to help us breathe a little bit better, that's why I asked about the 24 hours.

JOHN SOWDEN

Right, well as far as the machine, if it overheats, the compressor gets too hot; they have [overload](#) and things like that to keep it from damaging the components.

JACKIE

But it shouldn't necessarily lessen the life of the unit, or it may?

JOHN SOWDEN

You're going to, just like a TV set, it's going to be good for so many hours anyway, and if you leave your TV on 24-7 then instead of getting ten years out of it you might get three or four.

JACKIE

I see.

JOHN SOWDEN

I mean, there's certainly a finite amount of time that they're going to last. My biggest concern would be running it when it gets cool outside and then you end up running ice over the coil inside and then what happens is you start getting liquid refrigerant back to the compressor. And the compressor doesn't compress liquids too well, it's made to compress gases, so that would be more damaging probably than just it running it through the day or when it's hot out.

JACKIE

Okay, so if it were real cool out or at night, turning it off would be the best thing to do?

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah, you can leave the [fan](#) running, and that way you're still circulating the air and hopefully that will help with the allergies.

JACKIE

Oh, I hadn't thought about that!

1977 Gas Kenmore Dryer Making a High Pitched Squealing Sound

JOHN MCCULLOCH

We have a call now from Jan, in Clinton Township, with a [gas dryer](#) question on the Appliance Repair Show. Hello, Jan.

JAN

I have a [Kenmore gas dryer](#) and when I throw a load in, the first load I get a [high pitched squealing sound](#), and then it seems that once the dryer heats up, that the noise dissipates. Then I throw a second load in and the noise doesn't seem to be there. It seems initially when I start the dryer up; I get this kind of a loud whining sound.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. How old is the [dryer](#)?

JAN

Oh, I'd say about thirty years old.

JOHN SOWDEN

Oh, okay. From what you describe, it's a bearing problem, it's either in the [motor](#), or the most common thing is what they call an [idler pulley](#) and that's a pulley and a spring assembly that's made to put tension on the belt. Those, especially in the older [Kenmore's](#) like that, will [squeal on startup](#) and as it gets warm, it starts to wear in and is less likely to make the sound on the second load.

JAN

I remember it was relatively new I'd say a few years old and I did replace that [pulley](#) assembly.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay, you got 25 years out the repair, then.

JAN

Well, I did have to do an [igniter](#), also, in between. It's not used much, I live alone, and I'm gone a lot during the summer and of course during the winter, so that's why there's such longevity on this unit.

JOHN SOWDEN

And, plus a lot of the parts are interchangeable, some of the parts today on this unit. They made this [dryer](#) pretty dependable, so you can buy a [rebuild kit](#) which gives you new [rollers](#) and a [belt](#) and a new [pulley](#) for I think, maybe thirty or forty dollars and you replace all the working components inside that, so if you tear it apart to replace the idler wheel, you can replace all the wearing parts in there for a pretty decent cost and hopefully get another thirty years out of it.

JAN

Well, that sounds wonderful! I hope I can get another thirty years out of me! Well, okay so I might need new bearings on the [motor](#), or the pulley --

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah, if you look at the [pulley](#) you'll probably see where it's worn; sometimes you get some discoloration around the shaft that goes through the middle of it, that's just showing where it's been worn out. It could be the motor bearings but normally [it will squeal](#) longer and continue to squeal.

2002 Kenmore Dehumidifier Running But Not Collecting Moisture

JOHN MCCULLOCH

And we'll go now to Joanne, in Grosse Pointe Woods, good morning Joanne!

JOANNE

I have a [Kenmore dehumidifier](#); I believe it's a fifty-pint. It's about four or five years old. About three weeks or so ago I plugged it in for the season down in the basement. The power went on and you can see that it's powered on because of the digital number, the percentage is there, and when it has the options of continuous run or energy saving, six hours on, six hours off, whichever one you pick the light does go on so I know it's receiving the power. And I hear it go on, but that's it, then it goes off, and [it never goes on](#) again, it does not collect humidity, there's [no water in the container](#). Is there something wrong with it or has the weather not been humid enough perhaps that it's not collecting any water?

JOHN SOWDEN

No, it's been humid enough, but normally they'll cycle on and off. When you say that it runs, you can hear the [fan motor](#) running or compressor running or it just makes noise? Does this sound like it did before when it was working?

JOANNE

Well, it's just an initial plugging it in and hitting the power button that you hear it go on, and that's it, then you don't hear it anymore. I mean I leave it immediately so I can't really say how long before it goes off but I suspect that it's pretty immediate.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay, well the first thing you need to do is see what's working and what's not. There's normally a [fan motor](#) which runs to help pull air through the coils and then a compressor that basically does the refrigeration portion. So it's possible that you hear the fan running and yet the compressor is not. And it's possible that something is overheating in the cycle and causing it to shut down, or if this is an [electronic control](#) unit, it's possible that you have a bad control unit. There could be a crack in the board, or a loose connection or something that's causing it to fail. The best thing to do is to spend a little more time and kind of take notes on what's happening and what's not happening, and then you can always send us a request on our website, [RepairClinic.com](#). Go to the ["Contact Us"](#) section and enter in your information and hopefully they can give you an answer that will move you ahead a little further.

1994 Refrigerator Ran in Garage for Short Time and Now Only the Light Works

JOHN MCCULLOCH

And here with a [refrigerator](#) question, let's go to Ron, in Vermillion, Ohio, on the Appliance Repair Show on News/Talk 760 WJR. Good morning, Ron.

RON

I recently bought a new refrigerator. My old [refrigerator](#) was thirteen years old, nothing was wrong with it outside of the fact of the appearance was looking a little bad. I took my old refrigerator and decided to use it in my garage. I plugged it in and it ran for about twenty minutes and now the compressor no longer works. The [only thing that works is the light bulb](#). I realize that in the kitchen I have a twenty-amp breaker and in the garage

I have a fifteen-amp breaker, so I'm thinking that's probably the issue. Again, it ran for about twenty minutes and now nothing works on it except for the [light bulb](#). What can I do?

JOHN SOWDEN

All that works is the light bulb and it's still plugged in?

RON

Still plugged in, well I unplugged it, but when you plug it back in nothing kicks on except for when I open the [door](#) the light bulb is on, that's it.

JOHN SOWDEN

And how long did you notice this happening before you unplugged it?

RON

I had it plugged in for probably a half-hour and it was running fine, and all of a sudden it just turned off.

JOHN SOWDEN

And did you unplug it then?

RON

I unplugged it immediately.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay, what's happened is more than likely, is that the [refrigerator](#) just went into a defrost cycle. There's a timer on refrigerators that every six hours it turns the machine off for twenty or thirty minutes. It's not based on temperature or anything else it's based on time, so what you've done is unplugged it, and now the [timer's](#) not advancing. If you plug it back in, and wait a half hour, if the timer's working properly, the unit should continue on, advance out and start working again. It's more a matter of a timing issue of when you moved it than anything.

RON

So, being a fifteen amp versus a normal twenty-amp breaker in the kitchen doesn't really have anything to do with it, then?

JOHN SOWDEN

I wouldn't think so. Most [refrigerators](#) draw between three and five amps running, so as long as there aren't a lot of other things on that circuit I wouldn't be overly concerned with that as long as it's fifteen amps it should be fine.

RON

Okay, terrific, I'll plug it back in and we'll wait and see if it kicks on, then.

2001 Kenmore Top-Loading Washing Machine Rusting On Top

JOHN MCCULLOCH

We'll go to Larry, in Fort Gratiot, with a washer question on the Appliance Repair Show. Morning, Larry.

LARRY

I got a [Kenmore washing machine](#) that's a Series 80, and the top is getting rust on it. I've already taken it off and sanded it all down and primed it and put Rust-Oleum® on it and it's doing the same thing right around the soap base [dispenser](#). My daughter has the same thing happening on her [washing machine](#) and I wonder if that's an inherent problem with them things? It's been about a year since I took it all off and sanded it down and primed it and painted it again, now we're getting little rust spots on the clothes. Is that a problem with them or do all washing machines do it?

JOHN SOWDEN

You're getting rust spots from the rust on the underside of the [top](#) falling into the machine?

LARRY

Yeah.

JOHN SOWDEN

Most often that's caused from spilling bleach.

LARRY

We don't even use bleach. If we do we dilute it and pour it right in the [washing machine](#).

JOHN SOWDEN

Oh, that's normally what causes it, around the bleach area [dispenser](#) it gets slopped over. And how old is the machine?

LARRY

It's not that old, about six years.

JOHN SOWDEN

Like I said, most times I've run into these situations where there's a lot of bleach used or it's spilled around the [dispenser](#) area and if left there it will deteriorate. Also, if you're using bleach a lot, it's possible it's splashing up on the underside of the top, but any washing machine after a period of time will start to rust, but normally you don't see that condition until the machine's twelve, fifteen years old.

LARRY

I told my wife to leave the top open when she's not using it so that it dries, but that doesn't seem to have any effect on it. I was just wondering if there's some kind of thing you can put around or something special you can use on it to recoat the [washer top](#),

because the machine is not that old. It doesn't make sense to discard the top or get another one that might do the same thing.

JOHN SOWDEN

No, and a new top would be around one hundred dollars to change that, if you had somebody that could powder coat it or find a different kind of [paint](#) that's more rust resistant, that might help as well. Otherwise, there's not much you can really do with that, I don't see a lot of that, but as I say every [washing machine](#) over a period of time, with the bleach and the water you'll get some rust. My last machine I had for twelve years and never had a problem with it. That's the way it always goes, it seems.

LARRY

I was just wondering if you knew of some substance I could use on it.

JOHN SOWDEN

No, I don't have a magic bullet for that one, I'd try sanding it down again and putting some paint on there, layering it up maybe, reduce the amount of bleach you use, try to see if there's anything else that's in usage in the machine that could be causing this.

2007 Sears Dryer: Converting a Four Prong Plug for a Three Prong Outlet

JOHN MCCULLOCH

And here's Lorraine, in Hartland, with a [dryer](#) question on the Appliance Repair Show.

LORRAINE

I recently moved from my other home and we had just bought a [dryer](#) and a washer, but in this home their dryer had a [three prong plug](#) and ours has a four. Now do I have to have the plug in the wall changed or would I have to call an electrician or could I just call Sears and have the service man come out? It's a Sears's model.

JOHN SOWDEN

You have a three-prong cord on your [dryer](#) now?

LORRAINE

My [dryer](#) as a [four-prong](#), the other one has a [three-prong](#). I'm changing dryers and putting my own in here.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay, so your dryer currently has a [four prong plug](#) on it is that correct?

LORRAINE

Right.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay, you need to go to a [three-prong plug](#) in your new house?

LORRAINE
Right.

JOHN SOWDEN
Okay, you should be able to just change the cord.

LORRAINE
Well, my son went out and he's gone two or three times to try and figure out how to put the right plug on. Now he says he doesn't want to fool with it anymore. He gets here and then there's an extra wire for some reason that he doesn't know what to do with, and says I don't want to fool with electricity.

JOHN SOWDEN
Yeah, the [four-prong](#) has an extra wire. The reason there's four wires, is the extra wire's the ground wire. Most new buildings are designed to meet the code, which require four-prong, which adds additional ground. This is to help protect you but there's plenty of existing wiring that's [three-prong](#), it's been like that for a long time and to just put a three prong on there would be fine. As far as how to wire it in, if you have any concerns about that and don't feel comfortable working with electricity, then yeah I would ask somebody to come out and change that.

LORRAINE
Do you think Sears would have somebody there that could do that? I'm trying to go the cheapest I can.

JOHN SOWDEN
Actually, any appliance repair shop in your area should be able to handle that. It's a pretty straightforward job and it shouldn't cost more than a service call for something like that.

Kenmore 10,000 BTU Window Air Conditioner Question about Leaving Unit in Window Year Round

JOHN MCCULLOCH
We're going to try to squeeze in one more question, a [Kenmore air conditioning](#) question from Joe, in Riverview, on the Appliance Repair Show. Hi, Joe.

JOE
I've got a simple question I've wanted to ask for thirty-nine years. I've got this ten thousand BTU [air conditioner](#) that I put in my window every spring and take out in the fall, and I'm tired of doing that, I'm nearly seventy years old. Can I leave the air conditioner in the window and just cover it up and not use it during the winter and fall?

JOHN SOWDEN
You can, a lot of people do that, you just want to make sure of course that the window is sealed up, make sure it's covered, and you still need to pull it out every two or three years

to clean it or oil the [fan motor](#) so there's still going to be some maintenance involved, but they have an [indoor cover](#) I've seen, where it's like a blanket that you can put over that. A lot of it depends on your windows and, you know, as far as what kind of cold you're going to get through in the wintertime, but there are a lot of people out there who leave them out year round and just put a cover over it. If you start getting drafts through there you might want to reconsider that.

JOE

Cover over the outside you mean?

JOHN SOWDEN

Yes, they cover the outside and as I said some have a cover that looks like a little blanket almost that you can put over the front of it as well and help seal it on the inside.

JOE

Boy, you really made my day, thank you so much.

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Now, be very careful going out and doing that, because putting the cover on is going to save you some labor but if you go flying off that ladder it's going to make it all not worthwhile.

JOHN SOWDEN

And also, if you do not take the cover off when you start it up next year, you might find it doesn't work too well. We see that occasionally.