

Appliance Repair Show Transcript—January 27, 2008

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1985 Kenmore Refrigerator Icemaker Not Getting Any Water to Produce Ice

JOHN MCCULLOCH

With a question on a [Kenmore Refrigerator](#), an icemaker that's not working properly, from Wayne in Williamston, on NewsTalk 760 WJR. Good morning, Wayne.

WAYNE

Well, the [icemaker](#) would make one or two batches a day and then it would get up to three batches a day; then it started cutting down to the point where it [wouldn't make any at all](#).

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay and this has been going on for how long?

WAYNE

Oh, it probably went on for two or three weeks before it quit.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. And the first thing you need to check in a situation like that is your [freezer temperature](#).

WAYNE

Yes.

JOHN SOWDEN

The freezer needs to be between zero and eight degrees.

WAYNE

The book says put it on three, so that's what I did.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. But you should use a [thermometer](#) and see what temperature you actually have in there. The [icemaker](#) will not cycle and make ice until the [icemaker mold](#) hits about fifteen to eighteen degrees. So it's possible if you have other problems in the refrigerator; when you have a [defrost system](#) starting to go out or the condenser is dirty and it's not able to cool properly, one of the first things it will do is slow ice production. So even though things might seem frozen in the [freezer](#), you might have it at that breaking point, to where you open up the [door](#) and it doesn't seem like anything has gone astray, but you're not getting the temperature down enough to cycle the icemaker.

WAYNE

It's supposed to be extra cold?

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, it's supposed to be at normal operation. My point is that you could have a problem with your [icemaker](#), or it's the environment which it is in, which is the freezer, and if [it's not cold enough](#)...

WAYNE

Well, the lever goes up and you shut it off and then the thing goes down and the things go around there in the [tray](#), but it doesn't seem to get any water.

JOHN SOWDEN

So the [icemaker](#) is cycling anyway, but you're just [not getting any water](#)?

WAYNE

It seems to cycle.

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, the first thing you should do at this point is to check the water supply. That's the water supply to the valve on the back of the [refrigerator](#). It's possible that is restricted. It's also possible that the [water inlet valve](#) is sticking, either open and allowing a little water to trickle through; if that's the case you'll find the [tube](#) that fills the [icemaker](#)—the little plastic tube in the back...

WAYNE

Okay.

JOHN SOWDEN

It is probably full of ice. So if you remove the icemaker, and normally there are just a few screws that retain it, and you unplug it from the wall, and you look at that plastic [tube](#), if you see an ice buildup there, you know you have a water supply problem. That's normally either low water pressure to the [valve](#), which can be something in your household plumbing, but generally it's the little shutoff valve that you mount to the plumbing to supply the [icemaker](#) with water is restricted, or the water valve itself is failing. If you need any more tips you can go to our website, [Repairclinic.com](#), and in the

search box just type in "[Icemaker Help](#)" and it will take you right to the icemaker page and will give you all the specifics of what to look for, what the components are and what they do. So after a little more diagnosis on your end you can look at that and hopefully figure it out.

WAYNE

Well, I appreciate the information. I didn't know if it would be something big. With the [refrigerator](#) being twenty four years old I didn't know whether to get rid of it or what.

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, an icemaker is an appliance within an appliance, and so at times it can be just the [icemaker](#) that's faulty, and at other times it can be the [refrigerator/freezer](#) itself that is causing the situation. But if worse comes to worse, if you just need to put in a new [icemaker](#), most of them run around a hundred bucks or so, so it's not a huge investment. And once people get used to having an icemaker, it seems like they can't go without it.

WAYNE

Well, the [refrigerator](#) before this lasted forty years, but this one's twenty four...

JOHN MCCULLOCH

They don't make them like they used to!

WAYNE

Well, I appreciate your information and I enjoy listening to your show.

Maytag Top Loading Washing Machine Leaking in the Spin Cycle

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Steve, in Shelby Township, joins us now. Go ahead please, Steve.

STEVE

My question is on a [Maytag top load washer](#). It [leaks water](#) in the spin cycle when it dispenses the water. I've had somebody come out and look at it. He said it has a cracked outer tub.

JOHN SOWDEN

Uh-oh.

STEVE

And I bought one and I took it apart and looked at it and I didn't see anything wrong with the outer tub. There are no cracks or anything.

JOHN SOWDEN

You got the plastic outer tub on that?

STEVE

Yes.

JOHN SOWDEN

And you said you didn't see any cracks whatsoever?

STEVE

No I didn't. I cleaned it up, and I noticed where that rim snaps in on the top was full of a lot of soap scum. And that's what I think the problem is from. What do you think it is?

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, if the tub itself, you saw no cracks in it...did you see any other signs of leaks when you took the [front panel](#) off? Did you see where the water was dripping? Was it where the [transmission](#) goes up into the outer tub or does it look like it was dripping off the side?

STEVE

I see a lot of soap marks on one side where it was dripping.

JOHN SOWDEN

If you look at the top of that, most of them have a series of holes around the top of the [main top](#) that snaps down over the outer tub.

STEVE

There's a [seal](#) too.

JOHN SOWDEN

Right, it's got a seal. And it's possible that has failed, but a lot of times what happens is, when it's spinning and/or washing you get [water that sloshes up over the top](#), and that top is designed to funnel the water back in to the tub. And it does that through a series of little holes on that top, and if you've got a lot of soap residue and things of that nature that have plugged up those holes, when it goes into spin it basically takes out all the water that's held on the top of that and shakes it off and it goes all over the inside of the machine.

STEVE

So what causes the tub to move back and forth...?

JOHN SOWDEN

It's made to do that, the whole thing sits on a set of [springs](#) and a [pad](#) underneath, and it's made to absorb the shock of out-of-balance loads and things of that nature. The outer tub being able to move around is normal, but as it does that, if you've got some water that's pooled up on the top of that main snap over cover, it will throw that off. Are you getting a lot of water when it does this, or just a little [water on the floor](#)?

STEVE

It did get a lot of water, and when I took it apart and cleaned all that stuff off and put it back it didn't leak anymore.

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah, you might have solved your problem. Unfortunately, you went and put a new tub in, which probably wasn't a lot of fun.

STEVE

It wasn't too bad. The sad part is when you call someone and they say you need a part that you really didn't need.

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah, you may want to take that up with them. They may guarantee their diagnosis. Most companies guarantee their diagnosis, obviously, if they do the work, meaning if they came out and did all that it would be something that you wouldn't have to pay for or they'd work something out with you. Obviously, we are proponents for do-it-yourselfers, so I understand why you tackled that on your own. That's not an entry level do-it-yourselfer job, so hat's off to you for tearing that thing apart and changing that thing.

STEVE

Oh, it was easy.

2004 GE Refrigerator Making a Clicking Noise and Ice Keeps Building Up Near the Freezer Fan

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Here's a question on a [GE refrigerator](#) from Annette, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the Appliance Repair Show. Good morning Annette, go ahead please.

ANNETTE

What I have is a frost-free [refrigerator/freezer](#) from [General Electric](#). It has the refrigerator on the top, the freezer on the bottom. Its four years old. We have had a repairman come to our house four years in a row, because what happens is that the [water that drains from the refrigerator runs down and freezes](#) just as it gets to the freezer unit in the back. There's a fan and the [fan](#) starts hitting this huge block of ice...

JOHN SOWDEN

And it makes a clicking sound when it's running, with it hitting the ice block there?

ANNETTE

Oh, yes! It's a huge noise! So I unplugged the [refrigerator](#), I have to let it thaw, and the last time I did it I thought, well, because it had been done three times before, I'll just try to let it thaw and plug it back in and see what happens. I know what the problem is; I just don't know how to fix it. But it never happened, and so I had to call a repair man again. So he came, he went in and tore it apart, defrosted it.....

JOHN SOWDEN

They got their hairdryer out and cleared it out?

ANNETTE

Hairdryer? The way that they have to get to this actual part is by taking off the door; the [refrigerator](#) door off.

JOHN SOWDEN

And take the freezer floor out?

ANNETTE

They don't go in from the back.

JOHN SOWDEN

Right, they have to take out the freezer floor?

ANNETE

Yes. It's totally frustrating, and I was talking to my mother and she said, oh, I think what you can do; you can put a larger [tube](#) in there so it doesn't freeze by the time it gets to the [freezer](#) department. Is that a good solution, or what is the solution?

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, there can be a few things that are causing the problem. One of them is that normally you have a [trough](#) that the water drains in, and then from there it drips into a receiver pipe that looks like a smoking pipe. And it's possible that it's not aligned properly, that it's a little off to one side and so some of the [water is dripping](#) from the trough and it's not going into the receiver pipe and it's running into our liner. I'm assuming it takes several weeks or longer for this to show up and be a problem.

ANNETTE

Oh yeah, it does.

JOHN SOWDEN

So it would be just a small amount of water after every defrost that's not being routed properly.

ANNETTE

Correct.

JOHN SOWDEN

In some units, depending on your [refrigerator](#) and how it's designed and what components they used, you can either put an alternate drain heater in, which is at times just a piece of wire that goes around the [defrost heater](#) and then is pushed in the drain area to help transfer heat. Other things that you can do are increase the defrost temperature where it terminates the defrost temperature. Most of those [defrost systems](#) have a thermostat mounted to the cooling coil that says, well, once this hits forty five

degrees in this area, I'm going to turn off that heater so I don't push too much heat into the [freezer](#) section so it doesn't take too long to recover and so you don't have a lot of frost on your food. It's that freezing and thawing that causes the frost buildup in there.

ANNETTE

Right.

JOHN SOWDEN

So there could be one or all of these things happening. Or, it could be just something that needs to be installed after the fact. They call it a service flash that you see periodically on a machine, where the manufacturer says, for example, we found that you need to put more insulation in this one. Have you talked to [GE](#) about this?

ANNETTE

I talked to GE and it was after my fourth time that I had called the repair people at the place where we bought it. And, I don't want to use names because they're really good people. And they said, well, we'll have to have another person come out and look at it and diagnose the problem. But I don't need a diagnosis; I already know what it is. GE was not very helpful.

JOHN SOWDEN

Oh, well I'm sorry to hear that. Normally, they're pretty good about stuff like that. My first recommendation is I would look at what the warranty is with the company you're doing business with and see if they're willing to come back out and have a second look if it fails again. Unfortunately, in your case, it takes a long time to do this so it's normally out of the warranty period to accomplish that. Also, I would call [GE](#) and explain it to them, ask them if there's any suggestion or they have something that they could install to solve the problem; they will probably want to send out one of their own people to have a look, because they haven't seen this machine before and they're following up on somebody else's work. And then from there, you can deal with them as far as what they say if they are willing to guarantee this, because obviously it takes a while to show up. So I'd try to nail some of that down; at this point I would call the service company you've been dealing with and ask what happens if it does it again, and then call the manufacturer and ask if they have any tips on this particular unit as far as adding an additional part or changing something to alter the operation mode to get to stop.

ANNETTE

Okay.

JOHN SOWDEN

Sorry you're having so many troubles, and sometimes it takes a while to figure it out. But sometimes just a little misalignment of that [tube](#) or anything else can cause it to do that, and it's not always readily apparent when you're in there working on it.

ANNETTE

Okay.

Amana Range with Oven Door Glass That Has Streaking In Between the Glass

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Janis, in Troy, good morning and welcome to the Appliance Repair Show. Go ahead, please.

JANIS

I have an [Amana stove](#), it's a ceramic top [stove](#) and the front is made of some kind of hard glass, obviously, and there's streaks in the glass. I can't clean it from the outside and I can't clean it from the inside. So it's in between and I don't know how to get in there to clean it.

JOHN SOWDEN

This is on the [oven door](#), correct?

JANIS

Yeah, the [oven](#) door.

JOHN SOWDEN

And you've got a big [glass outer panel](#), probably black or white?

JANIS

It's clear, but then it has a white kind of paint or some kind of...

JOHN SOWDEN

All right. And then if you open up the [oven](#) door and look down you see an [inner glass](#) package normally.

JANIS

Right.

JOHN SOWDEN

And are the stains in the inner glass package, or do you think it's in the outer glass package?

JANIS

I can't really tell, but I can't reach it from the outside or the inside.

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, on most units the [oven](#) vents and takes in air as you're baking and things, and sometimes they will have some of the air actually venting in or around the oven [door](#) area, and as you're baking you have some moisture, steam, things that can form on that glass, and then of course when it cools down it can stain the inside. If it's in the inner glass package there's normally a [seal](#) between the two [inner glass](#) pieces that keep the moisture from penetrating them, so it's possible that seal has failed and that's why you're

getting it on the inner glass package. If it's on the outer glass, which is a little more common, the only way to get it off is to disassemble the [oven](#) door, remove the glass, clean it and then put it back in and carry on. It's something that you may have to do periodically depending on use and what you're baking in there.

JANIS

I looked at the screws on the door to see if it was something I could take apart, and it kind of scares me because I'm not much of a fix-it person. And so, how difficult would that be, to take it apart? Often times I take things apart and then I can't put them back together again, and I sure don't want that to happen.

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah, the best way to do it is to remove the [oven door](#) as an assembly. Most often if you open the door and it sticks open two or three inches the door will lock open a little bit. We call that the broil position because when you broil in the oven you normally want to leave it cracked that amount. So put it in the broil position and then pull straight up. But there are several different configurations of those doors. Some have a screw on the inner door that you have to remove before you can pull it out; others have a [locking mechanism](#) where you have to lock the [hinge](#) in the broil position in order to pull the door off, and if you don't and you pull the door up, it will go "boing" and the [spring](#) will slap up against the side and it's a real pain to get it back on afterwards. So it really depends on your particular unit. As far as that goes, once you get it off you have to lay the door down and remove the screws on the perimeter of the door, and sometimes you have a [door handle](#) and any trim pieces, and then you take off the glass, which normally just sits in there with a few small pads along the bottom and the inside of it. The problem you run into is if you drop it, because the door is pretty heavy, or in reassembling it you turn the screws too much and crack that outer door glass. A new [outer door glass](#) can run anywhere from fifty to one hundred and fifty dollars, so it can be something that costs you more money in the long run.

JANIS

Could you come over and fix it for me?

JOHN MCCULLOCH

You know the funny thing is he probably could. Would he, no.

JANIS

Boo!

JOHN SOWDEN

If you're calling from Hawaii and you're willing to pick up the airfare, maybe I would. I'm just teasing. What I would recommend is next time you have a service man in your home, I would...

JANIS

Sweet talk him into taking the [door](#) off?

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, when you call and set up the appointment, not all but some service companies will have a secondary fee to look into an additional appliance, and normally it's half of what the original service call is. Just let them know that all you want is to pop the [oven](#) door off and access it and let you get in there with some glass [cleaner](#) and paper towel and put it back together. It would probably cost you, I'm guessing, anywhere from thirty to sixty dollars additional labor to do something like that. And that way you're not worrying about breaking anything. You can also, at that point, watch how he does it, and next time you won't have to pay for it.

JANIS

You know, that's very good advice.

JOHN SOWDEN

The other thing is you're also stacking it on top of another service call, which reduces your overall cost of having it done. So next time you run into something that you need a service person for, I would tag that on and then go from there and get the education.

JANIS

Thank you so much for your help.

1998 GE Refrigerator Making Clunking Noise When It Shuts Down

JOHN MCCULLOCH

And here, for our next call, a noisy [GE refrigerator](#) is a problem for Ken, in Fraser, here on the Appliance Repair Show.

KEN

Yes, it's making a [clunking noise](#) when you hear it shut down. It sounds like it's coming from the bottom there and it's kind of hard to see in there. I was just wondering what maybe it was.

JOHN SOWDEN

Every time it shuts down you hear like a metal clunk.

KEN

It's pretty loud, yeah.

JOHN SOWDEN

Like somebody taking a hammer and tapping a piece of steel type of a sound?

KEN

Yeah, it sounds like it's got some weight to it.

JOHN SOWDEN

Most often that is caused from the compressor. The compressor is basically a [motor](#) and a pump that circulates refrigerant through the [refrigerator](#), and it is sealed within a steel shell. It's normally round and looks about the size of a small basketball. What happens is that motor and pump internally in there are mounted on a series of springs to absorb vibration, and when one of those [springs](#) breaks, when the unit shuts down that pump comes to a stop real quick, and instead of the springs absorbing that shock, the inner pump motor assembly slaps against that outer shell.

KEN
Okay.

JOHN SOWDEN

The only repair for that is a new compressor. Now, I've seen them run years and years in this condition and then also, with it slapping around inside all it takes is it to hit the outer shell and crack a [valve](#) or something in there and then you have no compressor, therefore [no refrigeration](#), and you lose a freezer full of food. It's one of those things that you might want to keep an eye on, but if and when you decide to repair it, a new compressor when installed, which you need a person to do this with the proper [tools](#) and licensing, is expensive. You're probably going to spend at least five hundred, more likely six or seven hundred dollars to have someone perform this. At that point, you're going to have to look at the age of the [refrigerator](#); if it's old, its overall condition, and those types of things before you invest the money in it. Look at how old it is and whether it's possibly still under a warranty.

KEN
It's about ten years old, maybe.

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah, you probably lost out on that one. But some manufacturers, most now the warranties are shorter. Most have one year on the [refrigerator](#) and five years on the compressor. But at ten years, if you didn't purchase an extended warranty, my money is on that you probably don't have a warranty on it. And as I said, it could go quite a long period of time and not be an issue for you, but it is damaging the internal components of the compressor as it does this, and at some point it's probably going to be terminal.

KEN
Okay, well we'll see how long she lasts. Thank you.

JOHN MCCULLOCH

That's actually something that you wouldn't want to have happening and go away on vacation.

JOHN SOWDEN

No. That's as the earlier caller pointed out, it's always when you're not home or the person that handles all the repairs is gone, that's always when it causes a problem for you.

2000 Frigidaire Side By Side Refrigerator Bottom Vegetable Drawer Keeps Freezing Food

JOHN SOWDEN

And, we go to Kathleen, in Farmington Hills, here on the Appliance Repair Show. Go ahead please, Kathleen.

KATHLEEN

Yes, I have a [Frigidaire refrigerator](#) that's probably really close to eight years old. It's a side by side, and the [bottom vegetable drawer freezes everything](#).

JOHN SOWDEN

Is this something that's just started, or...

KATHLEEN

Nope. I've had service out there six times and they've never fixed it.

JOHN SOWDEN

What have they done in the past to try to remedy this?

KATHLEEN

Put tape over the vents.

JOHN SOWDEN

That's what I was going to suggest. I'm assuming the [vegetable drawer](#) is adjacent to where the [freezer](#) air return is in the side wall.

KATHLEEN

Right.

JOHN SOWDEN

Yes. And how many people in your home?

KATHLEEN

Just myself.

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, here's something that they may or may not be able to fix, and here's why. What they've done is what you're suffering from is called cold air migration, which means that the machine shuts off and some of the freezer cold air is then leaking back into the refrigerator section. With hot air rising, the cold air stays at the bottom where this [drawer's](#) at, so it's going to be cold in that area anyway. The reason it's doing this is the machine is [not running](#) enough to keep that airflow circulating. This is common in some [side by sides](#) when there aren't people in the home that are using it and therefore opening the [door](#), causing it to run and circulate that air. Now what they did is they actually reduced the size of that hole for the air return by putting tape over it, and that slows down

the process of that cold air from the freezer section leaking back into the [refrigerator](#) section. So, I guess my long winded point is, Kathleen, if you had four kids that were in there opening the door all the time and causing the unit to run and circulate that air and the machine was cycling on and off at a greater frequency, then you probably wouldn't have this. But this is something that periodically happens, that just because of run times and lack of [door](#) openings, this cold air migration is just something that's going to happen. And, if they've put some tape over it, all you can really do is try to hinder that cold air from coming back in by reducing the hole size.

KATHLEEN

Oh. So, in other words, I need a new [refrigerator](#).

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, you could just redistribute where you put things in there to save on the vegetables, put them in a higher spot in the unit, and put stuff that you do want colder, like meat and things of that nature in there, kind of change it around to fit your needs. But this is something that occurs every so often and I personally have been out on and have tried several different things and at times if you just aren't in the [refrigerator/freezer](#) a lot it just happens. It's not necessarily with one brand versus or another, it's just the design of that part, and the cold air return is generally in that area with the [vegetable drawer](#). Another thing that can cause that is if you are blocking the airflow at the top of the refrigerator, or you have a lot of stuff in that area that's reducing the airflow.

KATHLEEN

Would a lot of stuff in the freezer cause a problem like that?

JOHN SOWDEN

It shouldn't. Normally you want to keep the [freezer](#) at least half full because it causes the unit to cycle properly. No, I think this is just something that if you were to just open the [door](#) three or four more times a day, you might find that it probably would go away or get better; the other thing you might want to try is adjusting the controls a little bit by using a [thermometer](#). You should have between thirty five and forty degrees in the refrigerator section; if you decide to adjust the [controls](#), turn it up or down one number and wait twenty four to forty eight hours and get a reading on what temperature you have, and adjust it again.

KATHLEEN

Okay. I'll try it.

JOHN SOWDEN

Sorry I don't have a designated fix-all for that, but it's kind of the nature of the beast and how it's being used.

KATHLEEN

Okay. Well I guess I'd better start opening it up more often.

JOHN SOWDEN

You can try that and see what happens.

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Is that a common problem with [side by sides](#)?

JOHN SOWDEN

It's not a common problem, because most people that have a [refrigerator](#) that big have a need for it because they have a lot of people going in and out of it and they need that storage space. But yeah, there's been a few times in the past where you look at the machine and you go over it and everything's working properly, the [fans](#) are running, and it's just a matter of that cold air is at times leaking back in and it's just from it not running enough. The machine sits closed up and the fans inside aren't circulating the air across that freezer coil, and it just leeches back in. It's not super common, but it's out there, and normally by having more use it's not an issue.