



Fresh Air
Sash Cord Repair, INC.

Through a Glass Respectfully

When Patty Spencer looks through the windows of a vintage home, she wonders about all the others who have seen through the glass over the years. Were they watching the milkman's horse cart tied to a metal ring in the curb? Were they looking for family members returning from work or from wars?

As founder of Fresh Air Sash Cord Repair, Inc., Spencer also considers the individuals who handcrafted each window. "I wish I could sit down and talk with them — or work alongside them to see how they did things."



For Spencer, windows define a home's character. They also offer a unique view of the Northwest — from architecture to forestry. Her company improves the function of windows in homes built from the 1890s through the 1940s while preserving their character. She also advises customers on ways to increase energy efficiency while protecting the home's original design. "I've found that people love the windows in their houses. They just wish they worked better."

While Spencer was growing up, both her parents instructed her in their own interests — from sewing to riding motorcycles to home and auto repairs. She graduated from college with a degree in civil and environmental engineering and worked as a consulting engineer before starting a family.

Her first attempt at repairing a bathroom window in her Northeast Portland home challenged Spencer's engineer mind. "I set out to learn everything I could about double-hung windows. I read books, talked to contractors, collected tools and eventually repaired the rest of the windows in my home."

She started Fresh Air Sash Cord Repair in 1999, designing her work schedule around her sons' schooling. As her boys grew, she added capacity by increasing her hours and hiring an employee. She since has worked on more than 2,000 windows in Portland area homes.

How Fresh Air Can Help?

When Spencer takes on a window project, she will assess how much repair work is needed. By the end of the project, she wants each window to open and close easily — with as little or even less effort than when it was new. Services include:

- » Removing built-up paint that causes friction
- » Replacing broken sash cords with stronger products
- » Cleaning and lubricating friction surfaces, weather stripping, and pulleys
- » Releasing windows and top sashes that have been painted shut
- » Repairing sash frames, and more

Can Vintage Be Green?

Spencer worries that the current emphasis on energy savings may lead homeowners to believe they need to replace their homes' old windows. Typically, windows aren't the main source of heat loss.

Poor insulation and leaky ducts are two of the worst culprits. (Visit www.energytrust.org to learn about a free home energy audit.)

New windows can be expensive, and the resulting energy savings can be relatively small. Instead of replacing original windows, Spencer recommends weather-stripping or adding interior or exterior storm windows. "Even using heavy curtains — like the ones we see in historic photos — can make a big difference."

Spencer is happy to visit homes and look at the state of their windows. Once she and the homeowner agree on the work that's needed, she will make a bid based on cost per each window.

For more information visit www.freshairsash.com plus check out her reviews on Angie's List. Spencer can be reached at 503-284-7693 or email her at info@freshairsash.com. ■



Lead Alert

Old homes inevitably mean lead-based paint. Contractors like Spencer know the hazards lead presents — both to workers and to residents of the buildings they work in. As a mother of two boys, Spencer is particularly aware of the health risks associated with lead. She has long applied the best lead-control practices to her business.

Spencer attended her first training session on the topic in 1999. In 2008, Spencer completed the Lead-Based Paint Training Program for Remodeling, Repair and Painting at Oregon State University, and in 2009 earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's certification for Lead-Safe Renovation, Repair and Painting.

As of April 2010, the EPA will require certification of all contractors working in homes built before 1978 who are performing tasks that might disturb paint. For more information on lead paint visit www.epa.gov/lead.

Spencer said, "Anyone with young children living in an older home who is considering having work done should become familiar with the issues related to lead-based paint. When you interview contractors, ask as many questions about their lead-control practices as about their pricing and timing. Taking precautions about these issues is a small price to pay for the opportunity to live in these great old houses. Failure to pay attention could come with a big price tag."

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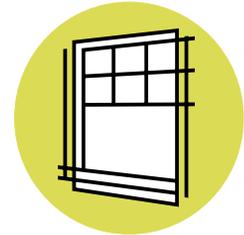


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Your windows help define the vintage character of your home.

We'll restore your original double-hung windows so they're functional, as well as beautiful.

- » We specialize in repair of wood windows in homes built before 1950
- » An EPA Certified Renovator, we work safely with lead-based paint
- » See what Angie's List members are saying about us at www.angieslist.com

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