

## Expert Advice on Home Improvement

TV Host of Today's Homeowner® and home expert for The Weather Channel

### (614) Home Automation

[Safety and Security](#), [Repairs and Installation](#), [Interior](#), [Today's Homeowner](#) Published 10/30/2006 by Danny Lipford



[Other Episodes](#)

Technology has had an enormous effect on the way we live. This is especially true around the home. In this episode we take a look at several systems designed to automate the home and make it more comfortable, more attractive and more efficient.



When you think about a home automation system there are several ways to approach it, from a stand alone video door answering system that can be mounted in the kitchen, or room of your choice, and set up to monitor the front door to automated lighting or even an extensive whole home automation system designed to control all the major systems within a home including lighting, HVAC, security and audio/video systems.

Blake Jochum of All Pro Sound showed us a condo in the Florida pan handle with a pretty extensive home automation system that incorporated both hardwired touch pads and wireless touch screens to control everything from the security system and motorized blinds to the heating, air conditioning and home entertainment system. Such an elaborate system requires some extensive electrical wiring be done before any walls are covered with drywall.

If you're looking for something that's more practical, affordable and doesn't require open studded walls, you might consider a wireless home lighting control system that can be easily installed within your home as-is without tearing out sheetrock to re-wire. With the StarLite system you simply replace your wall switches with new dimmer switches or keypads. Once all the dimmers and keypads have been installed and set up via easy to software to communicate to the controller you're ready to go. The wireless system uses radio frequency technology and your home's existing wiring to create a central lighting control system. The system provides over 100 lighting scenes, 512 dimming levels and 50 timed events and the system design can be integrated with your home security system, electronic blinds and thermostats. Depending on the bells and whistles you want you can spend \$500 or \$5,000, it simply depends on your imagination, budget and needs.

Whether you choose a wired or wireless home automation system you might consider a wireless home network system to help you monitor and control your home's systems over the internet. David Owens of Southeast Technical Solutions tells us that for \$150 a homeowner can set up a basic wireless home network.



### This Week On



### [Budget Kitchen Makeover](#)

View local listings for the show in your area:

Zip Code:

Go



### Most Popular Articles

1. [Installing Tile Over A Wood Subfloor](#)
2. [Inexpensive Interior Improvements](#)
3. [Built-in Garage Workbench](#)
4. [\(646\) Budget Kitchen Makeover](#)
5. [\(641\) Bathroom Makeover](#)

## Filtrete

### Invisible Invaders

You can't always see them, but you can help trap them.

Search

[Home](#)

[About Danny](#)

[Danny On TV](#)

[Today's Homeowner](#)

[CBS The Early Show](#)

[The Weather Channel](#)

[Around the Yard](#)

[Going Green](#)

[Today's Addition](#)

[Full Episodes Online](#)

[Local Listings Guide](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Danny's Blog](#)

[Ask Danny](#)

[Send Your Video Questions](#)

[Video Library](#)

[Quick Picks](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Press Room](#)

[Contact Us](#)

**Home Improvement**

[Attics and Basements](#)

[Calculators](#)

[Carpentry](#)

[Concrete and Masonry](#)

[Decks and Patios](#)

[Design and Decor](#)

[Doors and Windows](#)

[Electrical and Lighting](#)

- [Exterior](#)
- [Financial](#)
- [Flooring](#)
- [Garage and Storage](#)
- [Green Living](#)
- [Heating and Cooling](#)
- [Interior](#)
- [Kitchens and Baths](#)
- [Lawn and Garden](#)
- [Painting](#)
- [Plumbing](#)
- [Repairs and Installation](#)
- [Roofing](#)
- [Safety and Security](#)

## News Feed

-  [RSS Feed](#)
-  [Bloglines](#)
-  [Google Reader](#)
-  [MY YAHOO!](#)
-  [MY MSN](#)
-  [Help with feeds](#)

# PRODUCER'S NOTES

*from Allen Lyle*



This is one of the toughest shows we worked on so far this season. There simply is too much information out there to condense it all into 30 minutes. Couple that with the fact that we weren't doing any remodeling in this episode, and...well, I think you can see my point. Don't get me wrong. There were some pretty cool ideas we covered and a lot of information, too. I imagine we'll be doing a follow-up, possibly next season, since technology changes on a daily basis.

The automatic blinds were pretty impressive, particularly in the condo where we taped the segment. But, it was definitely a high end residence and not, typically, a feature some of us average Joes or Janes would purchase. However, there is a pretty neat alternative to the automatic blinds or shades that raise and lower at the touch of a button. Many companies are producing automatic tilting blinds. They won't raise or lower, but they'll open up to let the sun in or close them to block it. The great thing about these products is that you can install them without having to do any wiring. You simply plug in a remote wireless unit into a nearby electrical outlet and the remote control does the rest. I recently acquired one for my eight-year-old daughter's room and she loves it. The one drawback is that you are limited to the sizes available. I wanted one for the large window in my living room, but couldn't make it happen. You can find plenty of options by Googling the words "automatic blinds." Bali makes some in different colors and materials such as wood, vinyl and a faux wood.

The Centralite system made a lot of sense to me for existing homes. The biggest drawback of automating your home has always been the extensive re-wiring. To have a wireless system that is able to accomplish so much was simply an inevitable invention. But my first thoughts are, how much energy are you REALLY going to save and what is the lifespan of these wireless switches? Well, to answer the first question, you can save a lot, but it's all up to you. The American Lighting Association tells us that 50% of the electrical energy used for home lighting is wasted. That means we tend to forget to turn off the lights way too often. By using the dimming effect, though, you may be amazed at what you'll save. According to a recent study by the Louisiana Energy Conservation Project, if you were to dim your lights by only 10%, you would save 10% on your energy bill and increase your bulb life by 2x. Dimming the lights up to 50% will save 40% on your electrical consumption and increase your bulb life by a whopping 20x! In fact, when Centralite first came on the scene nine years ago, houses that got this system installed still have not changed a light bulb. As for the second question, those switches have no moving parts and are rated to last the lifetime of your home. Not bad.

[Read More >](#)

## Your Thoughts?

How much of an improvement do you think replacing your air and furnace filters makes to the overall quality of the air in your home?

- Makes a tremendous improvement
- Makes a great improvement
- Makes a slight improvement
- Makes no improvement
- Don't Know

[View Results](#) | [Past Polls](#)

This poll is brought to you by:



## Monthly Newsletter

Enter your email:

## Own The Show

[Purchase Today's Homeowner® episodes and other materials.](#)

## Other Tips From This Episode

### Homemade dust collector

If you tackle your own home improvement projects chances are you're going to create some dust once in awhile. Even power tools equipped with their own dust collection bags don't collect 100% of the dust. To capture the excess dust and keep it spreading all over garage or workshop grab a box fan and an air conditioning or furnace filter. Attach a furnace filter to the backside of box fan with a little duct tape (make sure the filter covers the entire backside of the fan) and you'll have created your own makeshift dust collector. When you're done, remove the filter, take it outside and gently tap the dust free.



### LG SteamWasher

Every day it seems like there are more gadgets for the home. Even the laundry room is stepping it up a notch. Just look at this new washer/dryer pair from LG. It has remote monitoring capabilities that allow you to check the laundry cycle from any location in the house via remote. So whether you're helping the kids with homework or cooking dinner you can monitor your laundry so you don't forget about it. The Remote Monitor displays the progress and remaining time on the washing, refreshing and drying cycles. All you do is plug the monitor into any electrical outlet within the home. The washer unit in this pair also has another cool feature. It's actually a steamwasher so clothes can be cleaned without water or detergent which means it uses less energy and conserves more water. All of these features have a price. The washer goes for about \$1,500 to \$1,600 and the Remote Monitoring package is an accessory that's about \$100 more.



**GLUES WHATEVER.  
BONDS FOREVER.  
THAT'S  
AMAZING!**

[Advertise on this site](#)

### Mower Maintenance

Get your mower blade sharpened before mowing season arrives. Keeping mower blades sharp helps you maintain a healthy lawn. Dull blades tear rather than cut the blades of grass, making your lawn look brown. To ensure that you always have a sharp blade available, buy an extra one. When one blade gets dull, replace and immediately sharpen it so you always have a spare.