

QUESTION & COMMENT

by Rick Muscoplat
editors@thefamilyhandyman.com

QUESTION

Quiet a noisy garage door

My garage door makes a horrible racket when it opens and closes. I've disconnected it from the opener to isolate the noise. It's definitely coming from the garage door itself. How do I quiet it down?

Chad Dormanen, Pittsfield, MA

The fixes are fairly easy and will take less than an hour. Start by tightening all the door and track hardware (Photo 1). Use a deep socket and a ratchet on all the nuts to snug them up. But don't overtighten—that can pull the carriage-bolt heads right through the door skin or strip the lag screw holes.

Next, check for worn rollers and hinges (Photo 2). Many track rollers have unsealed bearings that self-destruct after years of rolling around in a dirty environment. The wear can be so severe that the rollers actually wobble as the door operates. If your rollers are worn, consider replacing them with nylon rollers with sealed bearings. One source is garage-doors-and-parts.com. Nylon rollers are quieter and don't require periodic oiling. But they are more expensive (\$10 vs. \$4).

Replace track rollers one at a time (Photo 2). If your door uses torsion springs mounted on the header above the door, do NOT attempt to replace the rollers in the bottom brackets. Those brackets are under constant spring tension and can cause serious injury if you unbolt them. That's a job for a pro.

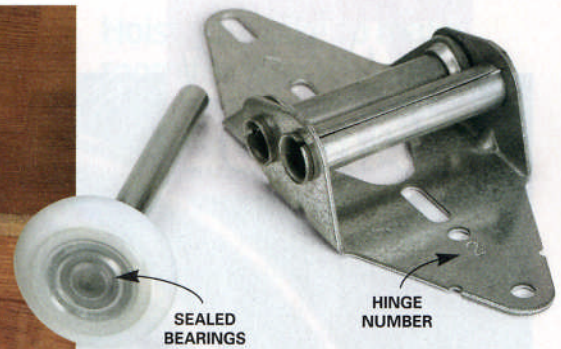
Worn hinges are less common than worn rollers. But sloppy hinges make a lot of noise and can cause the door to bind and wear out the tongue-and-groove joints at the door sections. Some play at the hinge is normal. But if you see an oblong hole where the tubular hinge pin mates with the hinge bracket, replace the hinge. Gray dust and metal

1 Snug up all the nuts and bolts on your garage door and check for worn parts and replace where needed. Then spray all the moving components with garage door lubricant.





2 Replace the roller by unbolting the hinge and tilting the roller out of the track. Swap out the rollers and reinstall the hinge.



3 Write down the number that's stamped into the hinge and pick up the same number replacement hinge (less than \$5 each) at the hardware store. Or take the old hinge with you to match it up.

filings around the hinge pin are early signs of wear.

Once you've replaced the worn door components, spray the hinges, roller bearings (unsealed style), and springs with garage door lube (such as Multi-Purpose Spray Lube; \$9 from garage-doors-and-parts.com). Also hit the torsion bar bearings, the opener track and any other pivot points. The special lube penetrates the parts as a liquid and dries to form a non-tacky grease that won't attract dirt and dust, which can gum things up. Lubricate all moving parts every six months to reduce wear and keep the door quiet. Avoid other lubricants such as oil, grease, or spray lithium grease. They're cheaper, but they don't penetrate as well and tend to pick up dust and grit—just what you don't want on moving parts.

COMMENT

Flipping the switch shortens CFL life

In "Switch On to Compact Fluorescents" (Jan. '09, p. 36), we told readers not to use CFLs in fixtures that are turned on and off frequently. Some readers have asked, "How frequent is too frequent?" Most experts recommend a minimum burn time of 15 minutes. But the truth is, you can turn them on and off as often as you want without affecting energy use. The energy required to start a CFL is equivalent to about 5 seconds of burn time, so you still save energy even if you have the light on for only a few

minutes. However, those frequent on/off cycles shorten the life of the bulb by almost 75 percent. Yet even with that reduced life, CFLs are still cheaper to operate. Here are the numbers: Say a 10,000-hour 13-watt CFL burns out at 2,500 hours. The cost of the CFL plus electricity to run it is \$8.01 (at NY electric rates of .1881/kWh). A comparable 60-watt incandescent would cost \$29.43. Even at a low electric rate of .0566/kWh, the numbers still favor CFLs—\$3.73 vs. \$9.71 for the incandescent.

Clarification

In our Feb. '09 article, "Cut Your Insurance Bills," p. 37, we were unclear about how to handle dog bite situations. If your dog nips someone, you should play it safe and notify your insurer if you're at all concerned about a lawsuit. If you don't, the company may have grounds to refuse coverage. Notifying your insurer will probably lead to higher premiums. But that's a small cost compared with a lawsuit that your insurance company refuses to participate in!