



Highlights: Appliance Repair Services

A broken home appliance can be a major inconvenience, especially when the dirty dishes are piling up or the groceries you just bought are at risk for spoiling. You want a service that will fix the appliance in short order, and at a fair price. **Washington Consumers' CHECKBOOK** magazine and www.checkbook.org can help, with ratings of 55 local appliance repair services for quality and price. Highlights from CHECKBOOK's appliance repair report include:

- Some appliance repair services were rated "superior" for overall quality by at least 90 percent of their surveyed customers, but others received such favorable ratings from fewer than 40 percent.
- You don't have to pay more to get good service. *CHECKBOOK found, on average, lower priced companies actually rated higher on service quality than their higher-priced competitors.*
- CHECKBOOK found substantial price differences among local appliance repair companies. For example, CHECKBOOK's undercover price shoppers found that the cost to replace the upper and lower door gaskets on a specific Whirlpool refrigerator ranged from \$230 to \$667. To replace the motor and pump on a specific General Electric dishwasher, prices ranged from \$222 to \$400.
- If an appliance is under warranty, use a service authorized to do in-warranty repairs for your make of appliance. Once the warranty is up, you can expect to be at least as satisfied with a shop that doesn't perform warranty work. Factory repair services tend to rate substantially below the average of other companies.
- The most common complaint with appliance repair is failure to get the item fixed correctly—sometimes after multiple attempts. Other common problems are missed service appointments, failure to bring the right parts, and delays ordering parts.
- There is no easy rule of thumb for determining whether it is worth repairing an appliance. If you are happy with the appliance (look, size, features, energy use, etc.) and it seems to be in good condition, it is probably worth fixing—it is likely to provide many years of service beyond the "average lifespan" usually cited for such appliances.

CHECKBOOK offers the following tips to help consumers get good service from any appliance repair service:

- Describe your appliance's symptoms and its make and model number when you call for service.
- Ask by phone how much the company charges for service calls and confirm this upon the serviceperson's arrival--the minimum charge, how much time is included in the minimum, what time units are used in figuring charges (per hour? per 15 minutes?), etc.
- After the diagnosis is complete, ask for a written estimate before proceeding with repairs. Also ask for a written invoice before paying. It should itemize labor, parts, the date, and any warranty.

The media may cite selected examples of top-rated appliance repair services, as shown in *Washington Consumers' CHECKBOOK*, and CHECKBOOK's editors are available for interviews. Please call Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 to schedule.