

Questions and Answers

Q: What should we do when our garbage disposal stops working?

Before initiating any troubleshooting, please follow common sense safety practices. **Never put your hand down into the grinding chamber.**

Occasionally a garbage disposal stops working. Usually what happens is that it won't turn on but makes a humming sound when you flip the switch. If you leave the switch on for very long when the disposal is jammed, the unit itself or the circuit breaker in your main electrical panel will trip and turn off the electricity to the disposal. When the disposal is stuck, something may be lodged between the impellers and the shredder.

To fix disposal jams, turn off the power at the main panel or unplug the unit from its outlet. There is a place in the center of the disposal, on the bottom of the unit, where you can use an Allen wrench to manually turn the motor. Turn it clockwise to dislodge the stuck impeller. Remove the Allen wrench before you try to run the motor again. Also, press the reset button and check or reset the corresponding circuit breaker in the main panel that may have tripped.

Run some cold tap water into the disposal and quickly flip the switch on and off turning the disposal on for a short burst. That should spin the flywheel and the dislodged obstruction should be washed down the drain. If the disposal will still not turn on and makes no noise, the garbage disposal is beyond repair and needs to be replaced.

In the future, keep anything too hard out of the disposal. Some items to avoid are bones, hard shellfish, and unpopped popcorn kernels. Do not put fibrous or starchy items like potato peelings, celery, pasta or flour in the disposal. These can cause particularly stubborn drain blockages. Clean it regularly using ice or frozen citrus fruit peels.

© 2008 All Rights Reserved, National Inspection Services

