

Holiday Decorating Tips

Boost Entertaining Spirit With Quick Repairs

(NAPSA)—Taking a crack at fixing your walls at home before holiday visitors stop by may be easier than you realize.

Most small cracks and holes in plaster and wallboard can be repaired in a few hours using inexpensive materials. Consider these helpful tips:

- **Prep the area.** Push against the crack to determine the softness of the area. Remove any loose material with a screwdriver, then clean the area with a slightly dampened paintbrush or sponge.

- **Gather materials.** You'll need a utility knife; a 4- to 6-inch-wide drywall knife; an 8- to 10-inch-wide drywall knife; joint tape for wider cracks; a ready-mixed or powder joint compound product, such as Sheetrock Brand Lightweight Setting-Type Joint Compound (Easy Sand); safety goggles and a dust mask; and either fine sandpaper or a sponge.

- **Fill with a first coat.** Small drywall and plaster cracks require one application of joint compound. Deeper cracks need two or more coats. Using a 4- to 6-inch-wide drywall knife, apply joint compound over the crack. Force compound into the crack, then smooth it out. Allow it to dry completely.

- **Reinforce larger cracks with joint tape.** Apply a thin coat of compound over the crack. Then insert a strip of joint tape to bridge the crack. Draw a knife over the crack to embed the tape. Let the coat dry completely.

- **Apply joint compound over the tape to level the repair.** Add com-



When repairing wall cracks, use setting-type joint compounds for fast, top-quality results.

pound with a drywall knife, then smooth and feather the compound out along the edges. Let it harden and add another coat if necessary.

- **Smooth the surface** once the wall is dry. Then lightly sand the edges of the repaired area with fine sandpaper or a damp sponge.

- **Prime and paint.** To ensure a uniform finished surface, prime the patched area. Wait until it dries completely before applying a new coat of paint.

These tips come from United States Gypsum Company, a leading manufacturer of gypsum board and plaster products. A free step-by-step guide detailing how to install and repair drywall is available by writing to United States Gypsum Company, 125 S. Franklin St., Chicago, IL 60606-4678; calling 1-800-USG-4YOU; or visiting the company's Web site at www.usg.com.