

CAR RENTALS: THE BEST AND THE WORST

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Consumer Reports

COOL AID

WHICH AIR-CONDITIONER?
WHAT KIND OF FAN?

BINOCULARS



JAPAN'S BEST

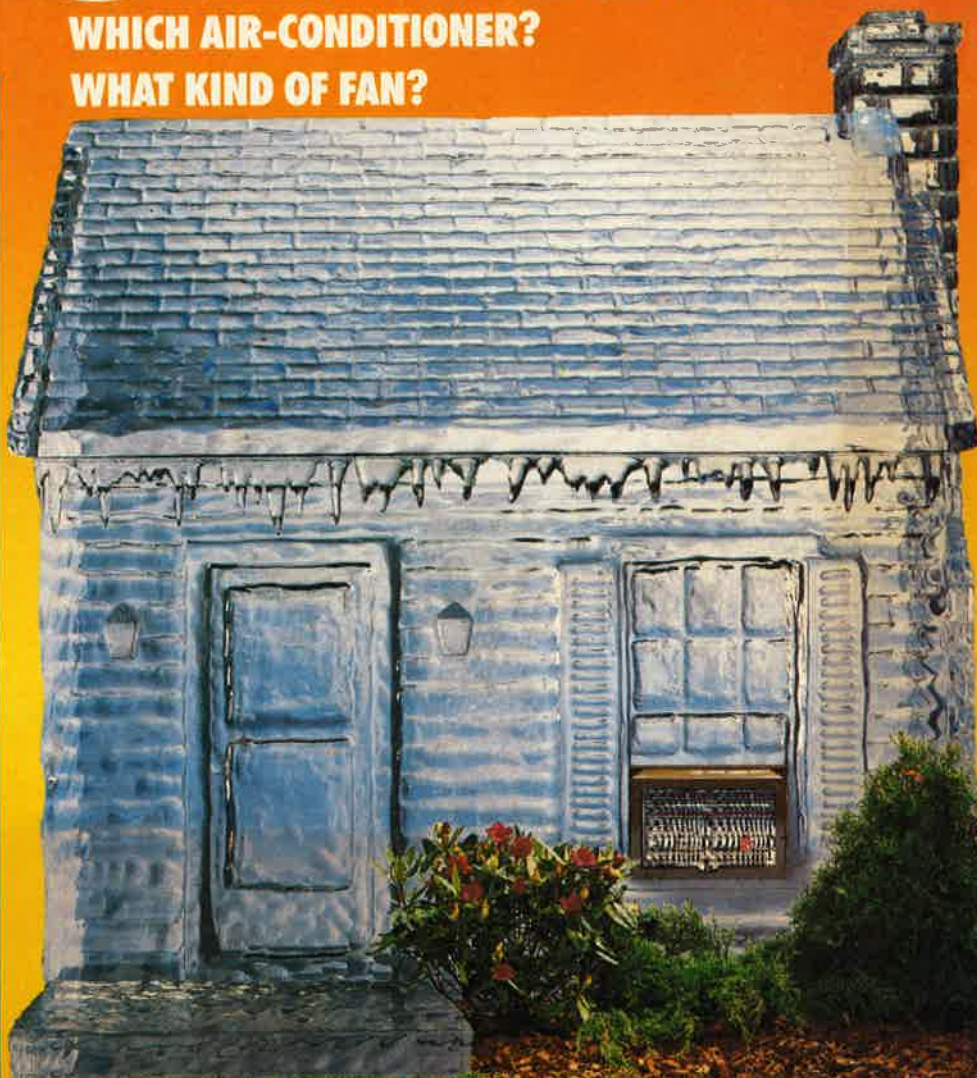


BATHROOM SCALES

Some would be more helpful than others to dieters.

BATHTUB SPAS

The cheap way to get a whirlpool bath?



Lead in water: Check and double-check

The concern over water quality—particularly the presence of lead in drinking water—has spawned a number of labs that can quickly analyze the lead content of water from anywhere in the U.S. The cost of such a test: \$20 to \$25.

But we have found that the results of mail-order analyses for lead can sometimes be disturbingly uneven (see CONSUMER REPORTS, September 1988). We were therefore intrigued to learn of a lab that claims to measure lead levels below 5 parts per billion and “guarantees accurate results.”

We ordered six test kits, at \$24.95 each, from the lab, Applied Technical Services Inc., 1190 Atlanta Industrial Drive, Marietta, Ga. 30066. The samples we mailed back were spiked with lead ranging from 1 to 50 ppb; we used distilled water as a control.

When the results came back, we compared them with results from three other labs we had checked last year. The labs are: Suburban Water Testing Laboratories Inc., 4600

Kutztown Rd., Temple, Pa. 19560; WaterTestCorp., P.O. Box 6360, Manchester, N.H. 03108-6360; and Watercheck National Testing Laboratories Inc., 6151 Wilson Mills Rd., Cleveland 44143.

None of the labs measured exactly the amount of lead we had put in our samples; that's not necessarily a problem, since the EPA allows for some small variations in such tests.

The analysis from WaterTest Corp. was closest to the mark. Applied Technical Services was just within the EPA's acceptable range in its analysis of water with high lead levels. So was Suburban Water Testing. WaterCheck's analysis was the most inaccurate.

Applied Technical Services was also reasonably accurate in analyzing water with low lead levels. We do have one quibble, though: The lab may measure lead levels below 5 ppb, but it doesn't report them. The lab said our 1-ppb sample and our distilled-water control each contained less than 5 ppb lead. We would have preferred to see more precision.

As we said in last September's report, the best way to test for lead is to send water samples to two labs. That advice still applies.

Penny Power wins five awards

Penny Power, the CONSUMER REPORTS for kids 8 to 14, has won five awards for excellence in educational publishing from the Educational Press Association of America.

“Smoking Surprises,” in the February/March 1988 issue, and “Cereal Freebies,” in the October/November 1988 issue, were honored in the category for feature articles. Associate Editor Amy Nathan wrote both.

“Those Terrible Tests,” in the October/November 1988 issue, won in the category for how-to feature. Associate Editor Jane Lubin wrote the story.

“Amusement Park Smarts,” in the June/July 1988 issue, won two awards, for how-to feature and for picture story. Associate Editor Jeanne Kiefer wrote it, Art Director Rob Jenter designed it, and freelancer Richard Hutchings took the photos.

Two openings in CU's Technical Department

We need an experienced engineer to manage our chemical division, supervising our tests of paints, cleaners, plastics, and other household products. Applicants must have a bachelor's or master's degree in chemical engineering; at least 10 years' direct lab experience; and a thorough understanding of quality control, test-method development, statistical test design, and chemical analysis. Some management experience is desirable.

We also have an opening in our electronics division for a senior-level lab technician. Applicants must have a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering or the equivalent, and at least one year's experience in the use of advanced electronic test equipment. We also require a strong background in state-of-the-art television audiovisual theory and practice, and proficiency in the use of IBM-PC or equivalent computers.

To apply for these positions, send your resume with salary history and requirements to Consumers Union, Box HC, 256 Washington St., Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10553.

CU is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

More Lifetime Members

Donations from hundreds of thousands of readers have made it possible for CU to buy the building in Yonkers, N.Y., that will next year become the Consumer Reports National Testing and Research Center. Our thanks to our newest Lifetime Members, individuals who have donated \$1000 or more to our fund-raising campaign:

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In addition, 60 Lifetime Members wish to remain anonymous.