

Seasonal Maintenance For a Healthy Home



SPRING



HVAC SYSTEM

Central Air Conditioning

- Make sure the condensing unit located outside is not covered up with leaves, newspaper, etc.
- Change or clean the filters regularly.
- Be sure access panels are secure, and screws are in place.
- Set the thermostat in the cooling mode. Run your air conditioner for a few minutes now, before you need it.
- Schedule a maintenance call before it gets hot to have a professional check the following items:
 - Check for proper refrigerant (Freon) levels. A low level indicates a leak, to be found and repaired before adding more Freon.
 - Check filters, electrical components and controls.
 - Check Condenser for cracks, clean evaporator and condenser coils, as needed.
 - Oil motors as needed.
 - Calibrate thermostat.

Evaporative Air Conditioner

- Hire a professional to clean unit; check belt tension & adjust if necessary; replace cracked or worn belt.
- Clean or replace air filter; clean condenser or evaporator coils & condensate drain; remove debris from outdoor unit.

Wall and Window Air Conditioning Units

- Have your unit checked out to make sure it's working properly before you need it.
- Replace dirty filters and clean dirt, insects and debris from the grilles and cooling fins.
- Prune nearby trees and shrubs.
- Check dehumidifier and drain- clean if necessary.
- Have fireplace or wood stove and chimney cleaned and serviced as needed.
- Shut down, drain and clean furnace humidifier, and close furnace humidifier damper on units with central air conditioning.
- Turn OFF gas furnace and fireplace pilot lights where possible.
- Lubricate blower motor.
- If you didn't have an annual check-up done last fall, schedule one now to have a certified professional inspect the wiring, check belts and replace if needed, and oil the moving parts.
- Arrange for service calls before the start of cooling season to get better attention and have more flexibility when scheduling appointments.

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

- Trip the main circuit and reset to test operation.
- Check GFCI's.
- Inspect electrical cords.

SMOKE ALARM & CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

- Check the batteries regularly. Some alarms are hard-wired directly into your home.
- If the unit emits a light to signal that it is working, be sure the light is on.
- Check fire extinguishers.
- If you don't currently have a carbon monoxide detector, consider having one installed. Check the batteries regularly. Some alarms are hard-wired directly into your home.
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- Check fire extinguishers.
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STRUCTURE

- Inspect basement and crawl space for moisture and rotten wood.
- Check attic for water damage, and infestation of birds, insects or rodents.
- Inspect exterior painted surfaces for cracking and wear.
- Examine the foundation walls for cracks, leaks or signs of moisture, and repair as required.
- Re-level any exterior steps or decks that moved as a result of frost or settling.
- Check for and seal off any holes in exterior cladding that could be entry point for small pests like bats or squirrels.
- Inspect exterior trim, gutters, and downspouts.
- Tighten all railings and grab bars.
- Check crawl-space for moisture and leaks.
- Inspect siding (especially on south and storm sides of house) for evidence of deterioration, including cracks, splintering, decay, and insect damage; clean, treat and repair as needed.
- Paint protects wood and stucco surfaces; postponing necessary painting will require more extensive and expensive preparation (scraping, sanding and priming) and repairs before repainting in the future.



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- Brick and stone: check joints between wood and masonry. Waterproof, repair or repoint if necessary.
- Wood: Look for lifting or peeling paint, splitting wood or areas where the wood grain is separating or “checking” because water is getting into the siding.
- Stucco: a chalky residue that rubs off on your hand is evidence of oxidation, a deterioration of paint or color coat that reduces stucco’s insulating value. If the stucco is cracked, this allows water to get in around windows and doors. Repair as needed.
- Trim: Look for peeling paint on the fascia boards, window sills and sashes that could allow water in to form mildew and fungus on the interior behind curtains, blinds and window coverings. Consider installing maintenance free vinyl or aluminum trim.
- Check flashings around all surface projections and sidewalls, and replace if necessary.
- Inspect caulking and grout around tubs, showers, and sinks; have it replaced if deteriorating.
- Check grading for proper slope away from foundation wall.
- Inspect for cracks and moisture and repair if necessary.
- Make sure insulation covers the entire attic floor; look into adding more to meet recently updated building codes and reduce future cooling and heating costs.
- Check to make sure attic and/or whole house fans are working properly.

ROOFING SYSTEM

- Inspect roof for any damage inflicted to the roof over the winter months (missing, broken or misshapen shingles, damage caused by snow, ice, or severe wind).
- Inspect roof surface for warping, aging, moss, and cracking, making sure that shingles, shakes or tiles are sound; repair or replace as needed.
- Inspect the flashing around chimneys, skylights and vents.
- Seal cracks or openings where water could penetrate.
- Make sure all your gable, soffit, and ridge vents are open to allow proper ventilation.
- Check eaves and soffits for sign of water damage, or deteriorating paint.
- Repair, repaint or consider wrapping with low maintenance vinyl or aluminum soffits and fascia.
- Inspect attic for insulation and leak stains.

GUTTERS & DOWNSPOUTS

- Clean out accumulations of debris.
- Patch leaks along seams or corners with patching compound for gutters.
- Check eaves, troughs and downspouts for loose joints and secure attachment to your home; clear any obstructions.
- Ensure water flows away from your foundation so it can’t

erode the soil or run into basement or crawl space. Install gutter accessories to divert water, channel underground drain lines into existing yard drainage or storm sewers, or have a dry well installed at the end of the drainpipe to slowly distribute the water to surrounding soil.

WINDOWS & DOORS

- Clean windows, screens and hardware, and replace storm windows with screens. Repair or replace screens if needed.
- Inspect caulking around windows, doors and siding.
- Replace loose or brittle caulking. Inspect weather-stripping.
- Inspect caulking and replace if deteriorating.
- Tighten or repair any loose or damaged frames and repaint if necessary; replace broken, worn, or missing hardware; tighten and lubricate door hinges and closers.
- Fill cracks, caulk edges, repaint; replace if necessary.
- Check screws on door locksets and tighten as needed.
- Lubricate bi-fold and bi-pass doors as needed.

DRIVEWAYS, WALKWAYS, DECKS & PATIOS

- Remove dirt and weeds from cracks, spray with a high-pressure hose, treat with weed killer and patch with a special patching product.
- Check all decks, patios, porches, stairs and railings for loose members and deterioration, such as cracks, splintering, decay, and insect damage; treat wood, set nails and repair or replace rotted board, as needed.
- If cleaned, sealed and maintained, it should only be necessary to refinish and/or stain wooden decks every 2 or 3 years.
- Thoroughly clean and dry surfaces before adding another coat of stain or protective finish.
- Remove mold and mildew, fungus, tree sap, grease and bird droppings with appropriate commercial deck cleaners (or homemade mixtures) and a stiff brushed broom. Mildew and fungus may be removed by mixing one cup of chlorine bleach per gallon of water, scrub, and rinse well.

LANDSCAPING

- Clear all drainage ditches and culverts of debris.
- Check outdoor paint for peeling, cracking and coverage.
- Clean out the flowerbeds, remove fallen leaves and blossoms to avoid potential fungus and molds.
- Cut back and trim all vegetation and overgrown bushes.
- Trim non-fruit trees before they start to grow and both fruit trees and rose bushes before they start to bud to improve production.
- Consider a lawn renovation to eliminate the brown spots and crab grass left over from last summer; reseed bare spots.
- Apply pre-emergent to prevent weeds as soon as it starts to warm up.



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- Repair and paint fences as necessary- allow wood fences to dry adequately before tackling this task.
- If necessary, fertilize young trees.
- Termites can cause thousands of dollars' worth of property damage before homeowners even realize they have an infestation, and other pests can threaten your family members and pets with bites and diseases. Visually inspect for insects every 6 months to avoid potential infestations and damage to exterior walls. Contact a pest control specialist for a free inspection and evaluation of risk.
- Natural stone like granite needs regular maintenance every 6 months. Seal with an impregnating liquid silicon stone sealer to repel both water and oil-based stains more effectively.

PLUMBING

- Open valve to outside hose connection after all danger of frost has passed.
- Check for leaks around outside hose bibs and evidence of rust or white lime deposits that may indicate a leak is starting.
- Remove insulation around outdoor water pipes.
- Ensure sump pump is operating properly before the spring thaw sets in. Ensure discharge pipe is connected and allows water to drain away from the foundation.
- Check lawn sprinkler system for broken heads, leaky valves and exposed lines.
- After consulting your hot water tank owner's manual, carefully test the temperature and pressure relief valve to ensure it is not stuck. Caution: This test may release hot water that can cause burns.
- Drain water from the tank seasonally to remove rust and sediment from the bottom of the tank. Every 6 months you should turn off the power source and drain it completely until it's clear of sediment.
- Also inspect flue assembly (gas heater); check for leaks and corrosion.
- Have well water tested for quality. It is recommended that you test for bacteria every 6 months.
- Make sure overflow holes on tubs are clear and open to prevent water damage to floors and ceilings.
- Never use caustic liquid drain openers on a completely

clogged drain because it can severely damage your pipes. If you can't clear a clog after a few attempts, contact a drain-cleaning service or licensed plumber.

- After having a drain cleared mechanically, consider using a non-toxic biological drain cleaner regularly to keep drains clear. (Avoid putting bleach or mouthwash down biologically treated drains because it kills the "friendly bacteria" working to keep your drains clear.)
- Clean faucet aerators: Unscrew, disassemble and wash out.
- Fix leaky faucets promptly; a leak wastes up to 20 gallons of water a day and can ruin a faucet set.
- Clean out debris from tub drain assembly, inspect rubber seal and replace if necessary.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Review storage area and move temperature sensitive material to warmer areas.
- Vacuum coils under or behind refrigerators and freezers.
- Change water filter in ice maker.
- Have your carpets, upholstery and draperies cleaned regularly to remove dirt and grit that can wear them out prematurely.
- Have a professional check antenna and satellite dish supports for possible leak source.
- Strip resilient floors of old wax buildup and apply fresh coat.
- Check drawers and hinges in cabinets for proper alignment. Adjust as needed.
- Check that fire extinguishers are fully charged; recharge if necessary. Keep an adequate number in kitchen, garage and basement.
- Clean grease filter. (Running it through the dishwasher is easiest!) This may need to be done more or less often, depending on how much you cook and/or fry foods.
- Although garbage disposers are generally self-cleaning, grinding small bones, eggshells, citrus peels and pulp, or a little ice will clean deposits and get rid of odors.
- Always run cold water when grinding to harden fats and grease and move waste all the way down the drain lines.
- Never grind clam or oyster shells, highly fibrous materials such as cornhusks, or non-organic materials like glass, plastic or metal in a garbage disposal.