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Home Maintenance Schedule

REGULAR MAINTENANCE IS THE KEY

Inspecting your home on a regular basis and following good maintenance practices are the best way to protect your investment in your home. Whether you take care of a few tasks at a time or several all at once, it is important to get into the habit of doing them. Establish a routine for yourself, and you will find the work is easy to accomplish and not very time-consuming. A regular schedule of seasonal maintenance can put a stop to the most common —and costly—problems, before they occur. If necessary, use a camera to take pictures of anything you might want to share with an expert for advice or to monitor or remind you of a situation later.

By following the information noted here, you will learn about protecting your investment and how to help keep your home a safe and healthy place to live.

If you do not feel comfortable performing some of the home maintenance tasks listed below, or do not have the necessary equipment, for example a ladder, you may want to consider hiring a qualified handyperson to help you.

SEASONAL HOME MAINTENANCE

Most home maintenance activities are seasonal. Fall is the time to get your home ready for the coming winter, which can be the most gruelling season for your home. During winter months, it is important to follow routine maintenance procedures, by checking your home carefully for any problems that may arise and taking corrective action as soon as possible. Spring is the time to assess winter damage, start repairs and prepare for warmer months. Over the summer, there are a number of indoor and outdoor maintenance tasks to look after, such as repairing walkways and steps, painting and checking your chimney and roof.

While most maintenance is seasonal, there are some things you should do on a frequent basis year-round:

- ❑ Make sure air vents indoors and outdoors (intake, exhaust and forced air) are not blocked by snow or debris.
- ❑ Check and clean range hood filters on a monthly basis.
- ❑ Test ground fault circuit interrupter(s) on electrical outlets monthly by pushing the test button, which should then cause the reset button to pop up.
- ❑ If there are young children in the house, make sure electrical outlets are equipped with safety plugs.
- ❑ Regularly check the house for safety hazards, such as a loose handrail, lifting or buckling flooring, inoperative smoke detectors, and so on.

Timing of the seasons varies not only from one area of Canada to another but also from year to year in a given area. For this reason, we have not identified the months for each season. The maintenance schedule presented here is, instead, a general guide for you to follow. The actual timing is left for you to decide, and you may want to further divide the list of items for each season into months.

Photocopy or print this maintenance schedule

To be effective, home maintenance must be done on an ongoing basis, from year to year. We suggest you make a photocopy of this maintenance schedule to use as your checklist. That way, you will always have an unmarked original to make more copies. Alternatively, you can print this maintenance schedule from CMHC's website, at www.cmhc.ca

Fall

- ❑ Have furnace or heating system serviced by a qualified service company every two years for a gas furnace, and every year for an oil furnace, or as recommended by the manufacturer.
- ❑ If you have central air conditioning, make sure the drain pan under the cooling coil mounted in the furnace plenum is draining properly and is clean.
- ❑ Lubricate circulating pump on hot water heating system.
- ❑ Bleed air from hot water radiators.
- ❑ Disconnect the power to the furnace and examine the forced-air furnace fan belt, if installed, for wear, looseness or noise; clean fan blades of any dirt buildup.
- ❑ Check chimneys for obstructions such as nest before turning on your furnace.
- ❑ Vacuum electric baseboard heaters to remove dust.
- ❑ Remove the grilles on forced-air systems and vacuum inside the ducts.
- ❑ Turn ON gas furnace pilot light (if your furnace has one), set the thermostat to "heat" and test the furnace for proper operation by raising the thermostat setting until the furnace starts to operate. Once you have confirmed proper operation, return the thermostat to the desired setting.
- ❑ Check and clean or replace furnace air filters each month during the heating season. Ventilation system, such as heat recovery ventilator, filters should be checked every two months.
- ❑ Check to see that the ductwork leading to and from the heat recovery ventilator is in good shape, the joints are tightly sealed (aluminum tape or mastic) and any duct insulation and plastic duct wrap is free of tears and holes.
- ❑ If the heat recovery ventilator has been shut off for the summer, clean the filters and the core, and pour water down the condensate drain to test it.
- ❑ Check to see that bathroom exhaust fans and range hoods are operating properly. If possible, confirm that you are getting good airflow by observing the outside vent hood (the exterior damper should be held open by the airflow). See the *About Your House* fact sheet *CMHC Garbage Bag Airflow Test* for a simple way to estimate the airflow.
- ❑ Check smoke, carbon monoxide and security alarms, and replace batteries.
- ❑ Clean portable humidifier, if one is used.
- ❑ Check sump pump and line to ensure proper operation, and to ascertain that there are no line obstructions or visible leaks.
- ❑ Replace window screens with storm windows.
- ❑ Remove interior insect screens from windows to allow air from the heating system to keep condensation off window glass and to allow more free solar energy into your home.
- ❑ Ensure windows and skylights close tightly; repair or replace weatherstripping, as needed.

- ❑ Ensure all doors to the outside shut tightly, and check other doors for ease of use. Replace door weatherstripping if required.
- ❑ If there is a door between your house and the garage, check the adjustment of the self-closing device to ensure it closes the door completely.
- ❑ Cover outside of air-conditioning units and shut off power.
- ❑ Ensure that the ground around your home slopes away from the foundation wall, so that water does not drain into your basement.
- ❑ Clean leaves from eavestroughs and roof, and test downspouts to ensure proper drainage from the roof.
- ❑ Drain and store outdoor hoses. Close interior valve to outdoor hose connection and drain the hose bib (exterior faucet), unless your house has frost-proof hose bibs.
- ❑ Have well water tested for quality. It is recommended that you test for bacteria every six months.
- ❑ If you have a septic tank, measure the sludge and scum to determine if the tank needs to be emptied before the spring. Tanks should be pumped out at least once every three years.
- ❑ Winterize landscaping, for example, store outdoor furniture, prepare gardens and, if necessary, protect young trees or bushes for winter.

Winter

- ❑ Check and clean or replace furnace air filters each month during the heating season. Ventilation system, such as heat recovery ventilator, filters should be checked every two months.
- ❑ After consulting your hot water tank owner's manual, drain off a dishpan full of water from the clean-out valve at the bottom of your hot water tank to control sediment and maintain efficiency.
- ❑ Clean humidifier two or three times during the winter season.
- ❑ Vacuum bathroom fan grille.
- ❑ Vacuum fire and smoke detectors, as dust or spider webs can prevent them from functioning.
- ❑ Vacuum radiator grilles on back of refrigerators and freezers, and empty and clean drip trays.
- ❑ Check pressure gauge on all fire extinguishers; recharge or replace if necessary.
- ❑ Check fire escape routes, door and window locks and hardware, and lighting around outside of house; ensure family has good security habits.
- ❑ Check the basement floor drain to ensure the trap contains water; refill with water if necessary.
- ❑ Monitor your home for excessive moisture levels—for example, condensation on your windows, which can cause significant damage over time and pose serious health problems—and take corrective action if necessary. Refer to the *About Your House* fact sheet *Measuring Humidity in Your Home.*
- ❑ Check all faucets for signs of dripping and change washers as needed. Faucets requiring frequent replacement of washers may be in need of repair.
- ❑ If you have a plumbing fixture that is not used frequently, such as a laundry tub or spare bathroom sink, tub or shower stall, run some water briefly to keep water in the trap.
- ❑ Clean drains in dishwasher, sinks, bathtubs and shower stalls.
- ❑ Test plumbing shut-off valves to ensure they are working and to prevent them from seizing.
- ❑ Examine windows and doors for ice accumulation or cold air leaks. If found, make a note to repair or replace in the spring.
- ❑ Examine attic for frost accumulation. Check roof for ice dams or icicles. If there is excessive frost or staining of the underside of the roof, or ice dams on the roof surface, consult the *About Your House* fact sheet *Attic Venting, Attic Moisture and Ice Dams* for advice.
- ❑ Keep snow clear of gas meters, gas appliance vents, exhaust vents and basement windows.

- ❑ Monitor outdoor vents, gas meters and chimneys for ice and snow buildup. Consult with an appropriate contractor or your gas utility for information on how to safely deal with any ice problems you may discover.
- ❑ Check electrical cords, plugs and outlets for all indoor and outdoor seasonal lights to ensure fire safety; if worn, or if plugs or cords feel warm to the touch, replace immediately.

Spring

- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Check and clean or replace furnace air filters each month during the heating season. Ventilation system, such as heat recovery ventilator, filters should be checked every two months.
- ❑ Have fireplace or wood stove and chimney cleaned and serviced as needed.
- ❑ Shut down, drain and clean furnace humidifier, and close the furnace humidifier damper on units with central air conditioning.
- ❑ Switch on power to air conditioning and check system. Have it serviced every two or three years.
- ❑ Clean or replace air-conditioning filter, if applicable.
- ❑ Check dehumidifier and drain —clean if necessary.
- ❑ Turn OFF gas furnace and fireplace pilot lights where possible.
- ❑ Have well water tested for quality. It is recommended that you test for bacteria every six months.
- ❑ Check smoke, carbon monoxide and security alarms, and replace batteries.
- ❑ Clean windows, screens and hardware, and replace storm windows with screens. Check screens first and repair or replace if needed.
- ❑ Open valve to outside hose connection after all danger of frost has passed.
- ❑ Examine the foundation walls for cracks, leaks or signs of moisture, and repair as required.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ 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 an entry point for small pests, such as bats and squirrels.
- ❑ Check eavestroughs and downspouts for loose joints and secure attachment to your home, clear any obstructions, and ensure water flows away from your foundation.
- ❑ Clear all drainage ditches and culverts of debris.
- ❑ Repair and paint fences as necessary—allow wood fences to dry adequately before tackling this task.
- ❑ Undertake spring landscape maintenance and, if necessary, fertilize young trees.

Summer

- ❑ Monitor basement humidity and avoid relative humidity levels above 60 per cent. Use a dehumidifier to maintain relative humidity below 60 per cent.
- ❑ Clean or replace air-conditioning filter, and clean or replace ventilation system filters if necessary.
- ❑ Check basement pipes for condensation or dripping and, if necessary, take corrective action; for example, reduce humidity and/or insulate cold water pipes.
- ❑ Check the basement floor drain to ensure the trap contains water; refill with water if necessary.

- ❑ If you have a plumbing fixture that is not used frequently, for example, a laundry tub or spare bathroom sink, tub or shower stall, run some water briefly to keep water in the trap.
- ❑ Deep clean carpets and rugs.
- ❑ Vacuum bathroom fan grille.
- ❑ Disconnect the duct connected to your clothes dryer, and vacuum lint from duct, the areas surrounding your dryer and your dryer's vent hood outside.
- ❑ Check security of all guardrails and handrails.
- ❑ Check smooth functioning of all windows, and lubricate as required.
- ❑ Inspect window putty on outside of glass panes of older houses, and replace if needed.
- ❑ Sand and touch up paint on windows and doors.
- ❑ Lubricate door hinges, and tighten screws as needed.
- ❑ Check for and replace damaged caulking and weatherstripping around mechanical and electrical services, windows and doorways, including the doorway between the garage and the house. See the *About Your House* fact sheet *Attached Garages and Indoor Air Quality* for more information on preventing garage-to-house air transfer.
- ❑ Lubricate garage door hardware, and ensure it is operating properly.
- ❑ Lubricate automatic garage door opener motor, chain and other moving parts, and ensure that the auto-reverse mechanism is properly adjusted.
- ❑ Inspect electrical service lines for secure attachment where they enter your house, and make sure there is no water leakage into the house along the electrical conduit. Check for overhanging tree branches that may need to be removed.
- ❑ Check exterior wood siding and trim for signs of deterioration; clean, replace or refinish as needed.
- ❑ Remove any plants that contact —and roots that penetrate— the siding or brick.
- ❑ From the ground, check the general condition of the roof and note any sagging that could indicate structural problems requiring further investigation from inside the attic. Note the condition of shingles for possible repair or replacement, and examine roof flashings, such as at chimney and roof joints, for any signs of cracking or leakage.
- ❑ Check the chimney cap and the caulking between the cap and the chimney.
- ❑ Repair driveway and walkways as needed.
- ❑ Repair any damaged steps.

To find more *About Your House* fact sheets plus a wide variety of information products, visit our website at www.cmhc.ca. You can also reach us by telephone at 1-800-668-2642 or by fax at 1-800-245-9274.

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