



GENERAL MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

REGULAR MAINTENANCE IS THE KEY

Inspecting your home on a regular basis and following good maintenance practices is 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 handy person 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 grueling season for your home. During winter months, it is important to follow routine maintenance procedures, by checking your home carefully for any problems arising 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 the ground fault circuit interrupter(s) 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 carpet, etc.
- 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, instead, is 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.

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.
- Open furnace humidifier damper on units with central air conditioning and clean humidifier.
- Lubricate circulating pump on hot water heating system.
- Bleed air from hot water radiators.
- Examine the forced air furnace fan belt for wear, looseness or noise; clean fan blades of any dirt buildup (after disconnecting the electricity to the motor first).
- Turn ON gas furnace pilot light.
- 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.
- Vacuum electric baseboard heaters to remove dust.
- Remove the grilles on forced air systems and vacuum inside the ducts.
- 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.
- Clean portable humidifier, if one is used.



GENERAL MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

REGULAR MAINTENANCE IS THE KEY

- Have well water tested for quality. It is recommended that you test for bacteria every six months.
- 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 screens from the inside of casement windows to allow air from the heating system to keep condensation off window glass.
- Ensure all doors to the outside shut tightly, and check other doors for ease of use. Renew 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.
- Ensure windows and skylights close tightly.
- Cover outside of air conditioning units.
- 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.
- Check chimneys for obstructions such as nests.
- Drain and store outdoor hoses. Close valve to outdoor hose connection and drain the hose bib (exterior faucet), unless your house has frost proof hose bibs.
- 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 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. Refer to the About Your House factsheet 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 CMHC About Your House factsheet Attic Venting, Attic Moisture and Ice Dams for advice.
- 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.



GENERAL MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

REGULAR MAINTENANCE IS THE KEY

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, for example heat recovery ventilator, filters should be checked every two months.
- Have fireplace or woodstove and chimney cleaned and serviced as needed.
- Shut down and clean furnace humidifier, and close the furnace humidifier damper on units with central air conditioning.
- Check air conditioning system and have serviced every two or three years.
- Clean or replace air conditioning filter (if applicable).
- Check dehumidifier and 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. Repair and paint fences as necessary.
- 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 which moved due to frost or settling.
- 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.
- 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 safe relative humidity. Clean or replace air conditioning filter, and wash or replace ventilation system filters if necessary.
- Check basement pipes for condensation or dripping, and 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 the dryer and vacuum lint from duct, the areas surrounding your clothes 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 and replace if needed.
- Lubricate door hinges and tighten screws as needed.
- Lubricate garage door hardware and ensure it is operating properly.
- Lubricate automatic garage door opener motor, chain, etc. and ensure that the auto-reverse mechanism is properly adjusted.
- Check and replace damaged caulking and weatherstripping around windows and doorways, including the doorway between the garage and the house.
- 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 exterior wood siding and trim for signs of deterioration; clean, replace or refinish as needed.
- Check for and seal off any holes in exterior cladding that could be an entry point for small pests, such as bats and squirrels.
- Remove any plants that contact, or roots that penetrate, the siding or brick.
- Climb up on your roof, or use binoculars, to check its general condition, and note any sagging that could indicate structural problems requiring further



GENERAL MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

REGULAR MAINTENANCE IS THE KEY

investigation from inside the attic. Note the condition of all shingles for possible repair or replacement, and examine all roof flashings, such as at chimney and roof joints, for any signs of cracking or leakage.

- Sweep chimneys connected to any woodburning appliance or fireplace, and inspect them for end-of-season problems.
- Check the chimney cap and the caulking between the cap and the chimney.
- Repair driveway and walkways as needed.
- Repair any damaged steps that present a safety problem.