

Seasonal Maintenance For a Healthy Home



WINTER



HVAC SYSTEM

- Air filters on fan units should be changed frequently based on individual living condition.
- Monitor outdoor vents, gas meters and chimneys for ice and snow build up. Consult with an appropriate contractor or your gas utility for information on how to safely deal with any ice problems you may discover.
- Clear registers from blockages by furniture, rugs, etc.
- Floor registers and grills should not be set to maximize air flow, but rather the system should be balanced to keep all rooms comfortable during the heating season.
- Turn on and test gas fireplaces.

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

- Check appliance cords, plugs & fixtures for damage or overload.
- 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.
- As you prepare to hang seasonal lighting, check electrical cords, plugs and outlets for all indoor and outdoor lights to ensure fire safety; if worn, or if plugs or cords feels warm to the touch, replace immediately.

GUTTERS & DOWNSPOUTS

- Clean out any debris that accumulated over the fall to keep gutters and downspouts unobstructed for winter thaws.
- Snow and ice build-up in gutters should be removed when it is above the gutter to prevent ice from damaging the roof.

ATTIC

- Inspect the attic as you dig out those holiday decorations.
- Check roof and gable vents to make sure they are clear and the screens haven't collected debris. Unobstructed vents will allow moist air to escape from the attic in the winter, reducing the chances of condensation and mildew buildup.
- Look for signs of insect infestation like nests. Wasps are dormant in the winter and their nests can be disposed of more easily.
- 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 an expert for advice.

WINDOWS & DOORS

- Examine windows and doors for ice accumulation or cold air leaks. If found, make a note to repair or replace in the spring.
- Lubricate hinges, locks and moving door hardware. Check to be sure doorknobs are working properly and are not too loose.
- Accumulated snow and ice can invalidate a garage door's safety device and prevent it from working correctly. Piles of snow can prevent the garage door from closing completely, which will allow cold air to infiltrate the garage. Moisture buildup will warp the bottom of the garage door.

PLUMBING SYSTEM

- Check all pipes to prevent freezing. Check all faucets for signs of dripping and change washers as needed. Faucets requiring frequent replacement of washers may be in need of repair.
- Clean drains in dishwasher, sinks, bathtubs & shower stalls.
- Test plumbing shut-off valves to ensure they are working and to prevent them from seizing.
- Run water in fixtures that are used infrequently (spare bathroom sink, laundry tub, show stall, etc.) to keep water in the trap.
- Check basement floor drain to make sure trap contains water. Refill as necessary.
- Drain water from the hot water heater tank seasonally to remove rust and sediment from the bottom of the tank.
- Check water supply lines and valves to sinks and toilets. Tighten if loose or leaking.
- 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 in biologically treated drains because it kills the "friendly bacteria" working to keep your drains clear.)
- Check for leaks in toilet at water feed and tank bottom; repair or replace if necessary.
- Clean faucet aerators: Unscrew, disassemble and wash out debris.



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- 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.
- Jetted tubs should be cleaned following the manufacturer's recommendations on a regular basis to prevent accumulation of soap scum in the lines.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Check again to be sure your shovel and/or snow blower is in good operational condition.
- If this wasn't done in the fall or summer, hire a chimney sweep to clean the chimney to prevent chimney fires. Be sure the damper closes completely to keep cold air out when the fireplace is not in use.
- Keep snow clear of gas meters, gas appliance vents, exhaust vents and basement windows.
- Clean humidifier 2 or 3 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 it necessary.
- Check fire escape routes, door and window locks and hardware, and lighting around outside of house; ensure family has good security habits.
- 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.
- Home safety check: trip hazards, loose carpet, loose steps, concrete, hanging wires, slippery surfaces, holes, splinters, etc.
- Change water filter in icemaker.
- Clean and apply light wax coat to wood finish cabinets.
- Check that fire extinguishers are fully charged; recharge if necessary. Keep an adequate number in kitchen, garage and basement.
- 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 garbage disposal.