

Household maintenance: When to do what.



It can be difficult to keep up with household maintenance projects in the busyness of day-to-day life. That's why we've broken down the tasks on this easy, seasonal home maintenance checklist. When you feel a change of weather in the air, keep this list on hand and start checking off items. It will help you create a safer, healthier home throughout the year.

Spring

- **Inspect the outside of your home.** Winter weather can take its toll on your home. That's why spring is a great time to complete an overall checkup. Look over your roof for missing or broken shingles and potential leaks. Check your chimney to see if there is any damage that needs to be fixed. Inspect the caulking and weather stripping on your windows and doors to make sure everything's in prime condition.
- **Keep water running away from the house.** How often do you inspect your gutter system and downspouts? If you're doing it only once a year, spring is an optimal season to get this job done. Pick a day to clean debris, then ensure joints are sealed and water is being diverted away from your home's foundation. Use this time to inspect your basement or crawl space for moisture or condensation, too.
- **Prepare your pool.** Is the fence around your swimming pool intact and secure? Is it built to meet your state's requirements? To make sure, check out the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's guidelines. Then, review and implement our additional tips for pool safety.

Summer

- **Get your grill ready to go.** Summer is the time for cookouts and backyard barbecues, so get your grill ready by giving it a good cleaning and by making any minor repairs. Scrub the

grates, clean the burners, and brush up on our grill safety tips.

- **Lighten your load.** We all know to clean the dryer's lint trap after every load of laundry. But did you know you should vacuum the dryer vent at least a few times a year, too? For instructions on how to do this safely, check out these easy steps.
- **Tidy your kitchen.** Over the year, kitchens can collect dirt in hidden places and problems can arise that we don't always notice. Get some relief from the summer heat to maintain this space. Clean or replace your kitchen's exhaust fan filter. Look over your dishwasher for any leaks, then do a deep cleaning of the inside, outside, and filter. Finally, go through and wash your fridge, paying special attention to the drip tray.

Fall

- **Inspect your fireplace.** Everyone loves a cozy fire in the fall, but how do you know your fireplace is safe? Once a year, chimneys need a professional inspection. That's because soot, creosote (what's left over when wood burns), leaves, and other debris can block your chimney and pose a threat to your home. For gas fireplaces, have a professional inspect the venting and check for corrosion, proper fittings, and joint connections.
- **Drain the water you won't need.** Frozen water can cause a great deal of damage to your plumbing and irrigation systems, so make sure yours are properly drained following your owner manual instructions. Don't forget to remove water from above-ground sprinklers and store your garden hoses to prevent water backup.
- **Get your furnace ready.** As the cold weather comes, furnaces start to get turned up. Be sure your heating system is safe and ready for use by scheduling an inspection for late summer or early fall ... before you even turn it on.
- **Ready your house for inclement weather.** Fall brings changing leaves and a slight breeze, but it also means that winter is around the corner. Protect your utilities by winterizing your windows and exterior plumbing before the cold weather comes. Add wrap insulation around your outdoor faucets and pipes. Trim loose branches, cover or store outdoor furniture, and secure loose items.

Winter

- **Start a stash of winter-weather supplies.** Is your snow shovel or snow blower in good shape? Do you have a large supply of salt? Don't let the first winter storm sneak up on you and endanger anyone who is walking or driving on your property. Ready your tools, driveway salt, and proper boots and clothing to get the job done.
- **Confirm your sump pump is all set.** Make sure your sump pump is working properly before a wet winter sets in. It's not a task you want to tackle once it's too late.
- **Start the new year with new batteries.** Every New Year's Day, change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and don't forget to test them monthly. The National Fire Protection Association reports the risk of death in a house fire is cut in half when functioning smoke detectors are in place. Check that there's a working smoke detector outside of each sleeping area and on every level of the house.

Following this home maintenance checklist each season will help you enjoy a safer, healthier home year-round. Not to mention, being proactive can stop costly repairs if something were to go wrong.

For even more protection throughout the year, get a home insurance policy you can trust. Talk to a local, independent agent today.