

## SMART WORDS *for* SMART HOMEOWNERS

*Welcome to the experience of experts and their advice on relevant homeowner topics.*

An Information eLetter

### HOMEOWNER'S SEASONAL MAINTENANCE INSPECTIONS

#### YOUR HOME IS YOUR BIGGEST INVESTMENT.

Appropriate maintenance of your abode is essential to its safety, cost-effective operation, lasting beauty, market value and long life. To help you get started, we've assembled these details and an easy to follow matrix of inspection suggestions. Here are a few "rules of thumb" to help you along. This is the when, where and how's of house checkups. Think of it as a Best Practices list. Call us when you need answers.

#### SEASONAL CHECKUPS

Seasonal, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual checks and repairs are always appropriate. A matrix of periodic suggestions follows:

- Monthly = 1 M
- Every other month = 2 M
- Every third month = 3 M
- Every six months = 6 M
- Every year = 1 Y
- Each Spring - = Spring -
- Each Fall - = Fall -

#### 1 M - SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Test all alarms monthly to make sure they are operating properly. Replace if necessary.

#### 1 M - GARBAGE DISPOSAL

Although 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 grease and move waste all the way down the drain lines. Never grind clam or oyster shells, or highly fibrous materials such as cornhusks, or non-organic materials like glass, plastic or metal. Hire a professional to repair or service your garbage disposal.

#### 1 M - FORCED WARM AIR HEATING SYSTEM

Replace disposable or clean the reusable filters if they are in good shape. Keep in mind, however, that these filters keep your furnace's heat exchanger clean and efficient, and if dirty or worn they do not clean the air your family breathes by trapping small particles that harbor bacteria, pollen, mold, dust mites and other irritants.

If someone is prone to respiratory ailments or allergies, consider installing a higher-performance filter or electronic air cleaner.

## **1 M - EVAPORATIVE AIR CONDITIONER**

Clean or replace air filter; clean condenser or evaporator coils and condensate drain when in use; be sure to remove debris or snow from outdoor portion of unit each month.

Contact a service pro if additional work is required.

## **1 Y - AIR DUCTS**

Consider having the air ducts in your home cleaned if family members suffer excessively from respiratory infections asthma or allergies, there is visible mold growth inside ducts or on other components of your heating and cooling system, the ducts are infested with insects or rodents or excessive amounts of dust and debris and / or particles are actually released into the home from your supply registers.

## **1 Y - CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR**

Change sensor element. If you have better things to do why not call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

## **1 Y - DECKS AND PORCHES**

If they're professionally cleaned, sealed and maintained, it should only be necessary to refinish and/or stain your wooden decks every two or three years. It is necessary that surfaces be thoroughly cleaned and dried before adding another coat of stain or protective finish.

Remove mold and mildew, fungus, tree sap, grease and bird droppings from exterior wood with the appropriate commercial deck cleaner (or homemade mixture) and a stiff brushed broom. Clean mildew and fungus by mixing one cup of chlorine bleach per gallon of water, scrub, and rinse well.

Sodium percarbonate works well to remove dirt, mildew and the weathered gray residue from sunlight degradation. Oxalic acid will remove metal stains around nails and dark tannin stains often found on redwood, cedar and oak. Use care and follow manufacturers' directions when using these products, wear eye protection, long pants, long sleeves and gloves, cover surrounding vegetation with plastic, and rinse well.

If you have better things to do than do-it-yourself call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

## **1 Y - SEPTIC TANKS**

Have 500 gallon septic tanks cleaned and pumped at the following intervals:

TWO PEOPLE: Every 3 4 years depending on wash loads and septic size.

THREE PEOPLE: Every 3 years depending on wash loads and septic size.

FOUR PEOPLE: Every 2 3 years depending on wash loads and septic size.

FIVE PEOPLE: Every 1 Years depending on wash loads and septic size.

## **1 Y - TILE, NATURAL STONE AND GROUT**

Have your grout professionally sealed every one to three years in medium to heavy-use areas and every three to five years in lightly used areas.

## **1 Y - SLIDING DOORS**

Clean the track that the rollers sit on with a clean damp rag, then vacuum the tops and bottoms of the tracks on all four corners. If you can get the sliding door off, clean all rollers top & bottom - then lubricate lightly with silicone. Let dry then re-install. This will add 10 years to the performance of the door and save you back as well.

## **1 Y - APPLIANCES**

Vacuum coils under or behind refrigerators and freezers; contact an appliance pro for service if necessary.

## **1 Y - AIR CONDITIONING UNITS**

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 all access panels are secure, with all the screws in place. Set the thermostat in the cooling mode. Run your air conditioner for a few minutes now, before you need it. Scheduling a maintenance call before it gets hot to have a pro 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 all electrical components and controls

Clean evaporator and condenser coils, as needed

Oil motors as needed

Calibrate thermostat

Check Condenser for cracks

Check filters

## **1 Y - EVAPORATIVE AIR CONDITIONER**

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

## **1 Y - Wall and Window Air Conditioning Units**

Have your unit checked out to make sure it's working properly before you need it. Clean dirt, insects and debris from the grilles and cooling fins. Replace dirty filters.

## **1 Y - ATTIC**

Make sure all your gable, soffit, and ridge vents are open to allow proper ventilation. Make sure insulation covers the entire attic floor; look into hiring a professional to add more to meet recently updated building codes and reduce future cooling and heating costs. Check to make sure your attic and / or whole house Fall - ns are working properly; consider installing attic or whole house Fall - ns.

## **1 Y - CARBON MONOXIDE AND SMOKE DETECTORS**

Change batteries and check to make sure they are operating properly. If you don't currently have carbon monoxide detector, consider having one installed.

## **1 Y - CAULKING AND GROUT**

Inspect caulking and grout around tubs, showers, and sinks; have it replaced if deteriorating.

## **1 Y - CLEAN CARPETING**

Have your carpets cleaned regularly to remove the dirt and grit that can wear them out prematurely.

## **1 Y - DOOR SILLS, WINDOW SILLS, AND THRESHOLDS**

Fill cracks, caulk edges, repaint; replace if necessary. If you're strapped for time, a handyman can accomplish these tasks.

## **1 Y - HEAT PUMP**

Lubricate blower motor. If you didn't have an annual check-up done last fall, schedule one now to have a certified professional to 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.

## **1 Y - HOT-WATER HEATING SYSTEM**

Lubricate circulating pump and motor.

## **1 Y - PEST AND CRITTER CONTROL**

Termites can cause thousands of dollars worth of property damage before homeowner even realize they have an infestation, and other pests can threaten your family members and pets with bites and diseases. Contact a pest control specialist for a free inspection and evaluation of your risk and hiring a regular service to keep your home free of all pests, including insects and rodents.

## **1 Y - SCREENS FOR WINDOWS AND DOORS**

Clean screening and repair or replace if necessary; 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. If you want more free time call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

## **1 Y - WATER HEATER**

Every six 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. If repairs are required, contact a service professional.

## **1 Y - ANTENNA**

Have a professional check antenna and satellite dish supports for possible signal leak that may cause poor or suboptimal reception.

## **1 Y - BASEMENT AND FOUNDATION**

Check grading for proper slope away from foundation wall. Inspect for cracks, moisture entry and rodent access. Repair if necessary. Call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

## **1 Y - DECKS, PORCHES AND EXTERIOR WOOD STRUCTURES**

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 boards, as needed.

If professionally cleaned, sealed and maintained, it should only be necessary to refinish and / or stain your wooden decks every two or three years. It is also necessary that surfaces be thoroughly cleaned and dried before adding another coat of stain or protective finish.

Remove mold and mildew, fungus, tree sap, grease and bird droppings with the appropriate commercial deck cleaners (or homemade mixtures) and a stiff brushed broom. Clean mildew and fungus by mixing one cup of chlorine bleach per gallon of water, scrub, and rinse well. Sodium per carbonate works well to remove dirt, mildew and weathered gray residue from sunlight degradation. Oxalic acid will remove metal stains around nails and dark tannin stains often found on redwood, cedar and oak. Use care and follow manufacturers' directions when using these products, wear eye protection, long pants, long sleeves and gloves, cover surrounding vegetation with plastic, and rinse well.

## **1 Y - DRIVEWAY CRACKS**

Asphalt- Remove dirt and weeds debris from cracks, spray with a high-pressure hose Spray, treat with weed killer and patch with a special patching product. Hire a professional if more involved repairs are required.

Concrete- the only alternative for cracked driveways and garage floors used to be removal and replacement but these days there are overlayments that may be professionally applied to cover surface cracks as long as the concrete is still structurally sound.

## **1 Y - EXTERIOR CAULKING**

Inspect caulking and replace if deteriorating, or hire a handyman to do it for you.

## **1 Y - FLASHING**

Check flashings around all surface projections and sidewalls, and replace if necessary.

## **1 Y - GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS**

Clear /install /repair gutters and downspouts and make sure the runoff is directed away from your home so it can't erode the soil around the foundation or run into your walls, 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. All gutters must be cleaned every year even if you have no trees on your property. Wind carries seeds, leaves and grass onto your roof, which is washed into your gutters during every rainfall. If you cant reach (or dont want to) call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

## **1 Y - LANDSCAPING**

Clean out the flowerbeds, removing fallen leaves and blossoms to avoid potential fungus and molds. Cut back and trim all vegetation and overgrown bushes from structures. Trim non-fruit trees before they start to grow and both fruit trees and rose bushes before they start to bud to improve their production. Consider a lawn renovation to eliminate the brown spots and crab grass left over from last summer and reseed bare spots. Contact a professional service about applying pre-emergent to prevent weeds as soon as it starts to warm up. Contact a county extension service or gardening service for advice about proper lawn and garden care for your area. For all of the above items, a prescreened pro may be your best bet.

## **1 Y - SHUT OFF VALVES**

Review the location of all of the shutoff valves in your home with all your family members so you'll be prepared for emergencies. If you're overwhelmed call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

### **1 Y - Whole-house water shutoff valves**

The main shutoff should be beside the meter if you are on City water. If you use a well, the shutoff will be on the house side of the pressure tank. You should also cut power to the tank.

### **1 Y - Whole-house hot water shutoff**

There should be a valve on the hot water outlet of the water heater, which controls all of the hot water to the house.

## **1 Y - TOILET SHUTOFFS**

Show your entire family how to shut off the toilet by turning the ribbed oval handle under the tank if it ever starts to overflow.

## **1 Y - SINK SHUTOFFS**

You should handles beneath the sinks or within the cabinets; the one on the left is usually for hot water, the one on the right for cold.

## **1 Y - DISHWASHER SHUTOFFS**

Look under the kitchen sink for a reducer coupling and shutoff valve leading to the dishwasher on the inch hot water sink supply line. It could also be between ceiling joists just below the appliance if you have a basement. Washing machine Valves are usually where the washer hoses meet the house supply lines. However, washer hoses are notoriously weak, so consider changing them routinely every year or at least close the valves when leaving home for an extended period. Gas shutoff valve Identify location and show entire family how to shut off. Electrical Panel / Breaker box Identify location and show entire family how to shut off main breaker in an emergency, or flip any circuits back on after an overload. (If it's a common occurrence, consider hiring an electrician to upgrade your panel or wiring).

## **1 Y - GAS-FIRED, FORCED-AIR CENTRAL HEATING SYSTEMS**

Hire a pro to inspect the thermostat, electrical components and controls, check the heat exchanger, flue, ducts, air flow and air fuel mixture, adjust the burner and oil the motor and circulating Fall - n.

Arrange for service calls before the start of heating and cooling season to get better attention and have more flexibility when scheduling appointments.

## **1 Y - HEAT PUMPS**

Schedule an annual service call to have a certified professional to inspect the wiring, check belts and replace if needed, and oil the moving parts. Arrange for service calls before the start of heating and cooling season to get better attention and have more flexibility when scheduling appointments.

## **1 Y - OIL-FIRED BOILERS**

Hire a professional for annual maintenance including flue cleaning, a fuel-filter change, cleaning and adjustment of the jets. Arrange for service calls before the start of heating and cooling season to get better attention and have more flexibility when scheduling appointments.

## **1 Y - FIREPLACES AND CHIMNEYS**

Have your wood burning fireplaces and stoves inspected annually and cleaned and repaired as required to prevent chimney fires, carbon monoxide poisoning and mortar and flashing failure.

Water leaks can also cause your mortar to deteriorate prematurely. Consider installing a chimney cap to protect your chimney from water, debris, and critters.

## **1 Y - CLEAN CARPETING, UPHOLSTERY AND DRAPERIES**

Have your carpets, upholstery and draperies cleaned regularly, once every 12 to 18 months, to remove the dirt and grit that can wear them out prematurely.

You should also have carpets cleaned after any event such as remodeling or holiday parties and eliminate stains as quickly as possible.

## **1 Y - APPLIANCES**

Inspect appliance hoses and ventilation according to owners' manuals. Hire a service professional if it is necessary to replace them. Vacuum the coils behind your refrigerator and freezer to (found behind or under the appliance) to increase energy efficiency.

## **1 Y - GARAGE DOORS**

Clean and lubricate hinges, rollers, and tracks; tighten screws. If any more serious repairs are required, contact a garage door pro.

## **2 M - FIRE EXTINGUISHER**

Check that it's fully charged and recharge if necessary. Be sure you have an adequate number located in kitchen, garage and basement. For additional peace of mind, contact a Fire Prevention and Protection Service.

## **2 M - SINKS AND TUBS**

Check for moisture or small leaks under sinks, bathtubs, and toilets; have them repaired quickly to avoid costly damage to cabinets and floors.

Make sure overflow holes on tubs are clear and open to prevent water damage to floors and ceilings. Flush with hot water and baking soda. Be sure to keep strainers in your bathroom drains to catch hair and soap pieces.

## **2 M - DRAINS**

Never use caustic liquid drains 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. Using too much force can permanently damage a fixture or pipe. 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.)

## **2 M - HEAT PUMP**

Replace disposable or clean reusable filters. Hire a professional to repair or service your heat pump if necessary.

## **2 M - OIL BURNER (PRESSURE TYPE)**

Inspect and clean.

## **2 M - RANGE HOOD**

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.

If it is too corroded, you may need to hire a service professional.

## **2 M - STEAM HEATING SYSTEM**

Test relief valve and replace if necessary; check pressure gauge and drain expansion tank if necessary.

## **2 M - WALL FURNACE**

Clean grills. Clean or replace filter.

For more serious repairs, do not hesitate to contact a pro.

## **3 M - FAUCETS**

Clean aerators. Unscrew, disassemble and wash out debris. Fix leaky faucet s promptly; a leak wastes up to 20 gallons of water a day and can ruin a faucet set.

Hire a plumbing pro to replace older faucet s with new ones with waterless valve cartridges instead of rubber washers. If you on vacation call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

## **3 M - TUB DRAIN ASSEMBLY**

Clean out debris; inspect rubber seal and replace if necessary.

## **3 M - FLOOR DRAIN STRAINER**

Clean out debris and scrub strainer. Hire a contractor to replace the strainer if it is in poor condition.

## **3 M - DISHWASHER**

Have a service professional clean the strainer, Spray arm and air gap (located on sink).

## **3 M - HOT WATER HEATER**

Check to make sure no combustibles have been set near the water heater. Keep your water heater in peak form by draining a quart of water from the tank four times a year-this takes less effort than having to turn off the power source and flushing it out entirely twice a year.

If you detect a leak, it usually means rusting through the bottom of the storage tank. You'll probably benefit from hiring a pro to replace it with a more energy efficient model.

## **3 M - PEST CONTROL**

Perform seasonal pest control quarterly. Consider hiring a pest control service to protect your home and family from insects, vermin and termites damage to your property.

## **6 M - SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS**

Change batteries and check to make sure they are operating properly. Check with your local building department to see if newer codes recommend adding more smoke detectors than were required when

your home was built. Also consider installing a carbon monoxide detector if you don't currently have any.

### **6 M - BASEMENT AND FOUNDATION**

Check for cracks and moisture and hire a pro to make any necessary repairs.

### **6 M - TOILET**

Check for leaks in water feed, tank bottom and repair or replace the toilet if necessary. Consider changing older models for better.

### **6 M - INTERIOR CAULKING AND GROUT**

Inspect caulking and grout around tubs, showers, and sinks; replace if deteriorating.

### **6 M - PIPES**

Check your pipes for rust or white lime deposits that may indicate a leak is starting - replace if necessary. Check for leaking around the outside hose bibs.

Install insulation around outdoor water pipes to protect from freezing.

### **6 M - WATER HEATER**

If you don't routinely flush a quart of water from the tank four times a year, then every six 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. A leak usually means the bottom of the storage tank has rusted through. You'll probably benefit from hiring a pro to replace it with a more energy efficient model.

### **6 M - CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEMS**

At the beginning and end of each cooling season, vacuum out the unit and lubricate the motor. If the unit is not cooling properly, contact a technician to check the pressure level of the refrigerant. Arrange for service calls before the start of heating and cooling season to get better attention and have more flexibility when scheduling appointments.

### **6 M - GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS**

Clear /install /repair gutters and downspouts and make sure the runoff is directed away from your home so it can't erode the soil around the foundation or run into your basement or crawl space.

Install gutter accessories to divert water and channel it to underground drain lines and into existing yard drainage or storm sewers, or consider installing a dry well at the end of the drainpipe to slowly distribute the water to surrounding soil. If you're overwhelmed call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

### **6 M - NATURAL STONE TILES AND SOLID COUNTERTOPS**

Natural stone such as granite needs regular maintenance every six months by sealing with an impregnating liquid silicon stone sealer to help repel both water and oil based stains more effectively and be much easier to clean with proper cleaning solutions and methods.

Be very careful to wipe up spills immediately and don't set things like olive oil bottles on natural stone materials for any length of time.

### **6 M - INSPECT YOUR ROOF**

Check for warping, aging, moss, and cracking, making sure that shingles, shakes or tiles are sound and repair or replace as needed. Inspect the flashing around chimneys, skylights and vents.

Seal cracks or openings where water could penetrate. If you see significant damage or wear, contact a roofing specialist to give you a bid on a roof replacement.



## **6 M - SIDING**

Inspect siding (especially on the south and storm sides of the house) for evidence of deterioration, including cracks, splintering, decay, and insect damage; clean, treat and repair as needed.

Brick and stone check joints between wood and masonry. Waterproof, repair or repoint if necessary.

## **6 M - WOOD**

Look for lifting or peeling paint, splitting wood or areas where the wood grain is separating ("checking"). This is evidence that water is getting into the siding.

## **6 M - 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. Hire a professional to correct the problem.

## **6 M - TRIM**

Look for peeling paint on the fascia boards, windowsills and sashes that could allow water in to form mildew and fungus on the interior of your home behind curtains, blind and window coverings.

## **6 M - LANDSCAPING**

Cut back any trees or shrubs that touching the exterior.

Prune deciduous and flowering shrubs regularly to promoting healthy growth, control plant size and shape, and increase the number of flowers and fruit.

Check with a local gardening service or your county extension agent for information about appropriate measure in your area for fertilizing, thatching, aerating and reseeding lawn, and controlling disease and insects in all your landscaping.

Consider hiring professional services to maintain and protect your investment in your landscape.

## **6 M - DOORS AND WINDOWS**

Clean exterior of upper-story windows twice a year; clean and lubricate sliding-glass-door tracks and window tracks.

Lubricate door hinges and locks. Re-set hinge screws and replace any incorrect or short screws.

Door and window pros can take the burden off of you.

## **6 M - WEATHER STRIPPING**

Check the weather-stripping around all doors, windows, and replace if necessary to reduce drafts and the loss of heated and cooled air.

Make sure the weather-stripping on the door between your garage and home is intact to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

## **FALL - SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS**

Change batteries and check to make sure they are operating properly. Also consider installing a carbon monoxide detector if you don't currently have any.

## **FALL - CLEAN CARPETING, UPHOLSTERY, DRAPERIES AND AIR DUCTS**

Have your carpets, upholstery and draperies cleaned regularly, once every 12 to 18 months, to remove the dirt and grit that can wear them out prematurely.

Consider having the air ducts in your home cleaned if family members suffer excessively from respiratory infections asthma or allergies, there is visible mold growth inside ducts or on other components of your heating and cooling system, the ducts are infested with insects or rodents, or excessive amounts of dust and debris and / or particles are actually released into the home from your supply registers.

## **FALL - HEATING**

Forced warm air heating systems. Before turning on your unit, make sure nothing flammable has been stored next to the furnace over the summer. Also, change the filters regularly. Be sure all access panels are secure, with all the screws in place. Be sure the thermostat is set in the heating mode. Run your heater for a few minutes to burn off the dust that usually collects on the heat exchanger over the summer (don't worry, that smell is normal) and to make sure it is in working order before you need it. Arrange for service calls before the start of heating and cooling season to get better attention and have more flexibility when scheduling appointments. Consider hiring a pro to perform a furnace maintenance check-up, including these steps

Inspect thermostat for proper operation. Inspect filter and change or clean as needed.

Check all electrical components and controls. Oil motors as needed.

Inspect heat exchanger for possible cracks, which would introduce carbon monoxide into the living space.

Check airflow. If diminished, it may be necessary to clean the evaporator coil and ductwork.

Check air fuel mixture, where appropriate.

## **FALL - GAS BURNER**

Clean burners and ports, or have them professionally cleaned.

## **FALL - OIL BURNER**

Have your oil burner professionally serviced; lubricate Fall - n and motor bearings.

## **FALL - THERMOSTAT**

On older models clean heat sensor, contact points, and contacts; check accuracy and have professionally replaced if necessary. Consider installing a digital thermostat for greater accuracy and control of your cooling and heating needs.

## **FALL - HEAT PUMP**

Schedule an annual service call to have a certified professional to inspect the wiring, check belts and replace if needed, and oil the moving parts. Arrange for service calls before the start of heating and cooling season to get better attention and have more flexibility when scheduling appointments.

Fall - Hot-water heating system

For steam heating, check shut-off valve for leaks and drain lower water cut-off per manufacturer's instructions. Lubricate pump and motor; bleed air from radiators or convectors. If you have questions, contact a service professional.

## **FALL - OIL-FIRED BOILERS**

Hire a professional for annual maintenance including flue cleaning, a fuel-filter change, cleaning and adjustment of the jets. Arrange for service calls before the start of heating and cooling season to get better attention and have more flexibility when scheduling appointments.

## **FALL - DOOR AND WINDOW WEATHER STRIPPING**

Check the weather-stripping around all doors and windows and replace it if necessary to reduce drafts and the loss of heated air. Make sure the weather-stripping on the door between your garage and home is intact to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

## **FALL - FIREPLACE AND CHIMNEYS**

The most important maintenance to do regularly is to have a professional clean your flue liners in order to prevent the build up of creosote.

Have your wood burning fireplaces and stoves inspected annually and cleaned and repaired as required to prevent chimney fires, carbon monoxide poisoning and mortar and flashing failure.

Water leaks can also cause your mortar to deteriorate prematurely. Consider installing a chimney cap to protect your chimney from water, debris, and critters.

### **FALL - STORM WINDOWS AND DOORS**

Inspect all windows and doors - replace any cracked or broken glass, 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; check for broken or missing glazing. Consider installing dual pane thermal windows to eliminate all need to remove or replace storm windows.

### **FALL - GARAGE DOORS**

Clean and lubricate hinges, rollers, and tracks; tighten screws. If serious repair is required, hire a garage door pro.

### **FALL - PEST CONTROL**

Remember, insects and other critters would naturally prefer to come indoors out of the rain and cold, if possible, as winter sets in.

Make sure all vents and other openings are covered and Spray for insects along perimeter of house if you don't have a regular pest control service.

### **FALL - WATER HEATER**

Every six 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.

Consult a service professional if any damage is evident.

### **FALL - EXTERIOR CAULKING**

Inspect caulking around exterior doors and windows. Replace if necessary.

### **FALL - BASEMENT AND FOUNDATION**

Check grading for proper slope away from foundation wall. Inspect for cracks and moisture and have professionally repaired if necessary.

### **FALL - DECKS AND OTHER EXTERIOR WOOD**

Inspect exterior wood for cracks, splintering, decay, and insect damage; treat and repair as needed. Keep decks clean, removing wet leaves and debris that can cause staining or encourage wood decay, mold and mildew growth.

Having your deck professionally cleaned and sealed can add years to its life.

Repair hinges and latches on your gates. Be sure to Spray lubricate moving and mating parts.

### **FALL - GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS**

Clear / install / repair / seal gutters and downspouts and make sure the runoff is directed away from your home so it can't erode the soil around the foundation or run into your basement or crawl Space. Install gutter accessories to divert water, channel underground drain lines into existing yard drainage or storm sewers, or consider installing a dry well at the end of the drainpipe to slowly distribute the water to surrounding soil. If you have better things to do call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

### **FALL - LANDSCAPING**

Cut back any trees or shrubs that touching the exterior of the house or garage.

Check with a local gardening service or your county extension agent for information about appropriate measures in your area for fertilizing, thatching, aerating and reseeded lawn, and controlling disease and insects in all your landscaping.

If you'd rather not do it yourself call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

### **FALL - PIPES**

Check your pipes for rust or white lime deposits that may indicate a leak is starting - replace if necessary. Check for leaking around the outside hose bibs.

Install insulation around outdoor water pipes and valves to protect from freezing. Its also wise to do this to any pipe that extends from the inside through a wall to the outside.

### **FALL - ROOF**

Check 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. If you see significant damage or wear, consider contacting a roofing specialist to give you a bid on a roof replacement.

### **FALL - SIDING**

Inspect siding (especially on the south and storm sides of the house) for evidence of deterioration, including cracks, splintering, decay, and insect damage; clean, treat and repair as needed.

### **FALL - EXTERIOR BRICK AND STONE**

Check joints between wood and masonry. Waterproof, repair or repoint bricks and stone if necessary. If you're just getting home from work call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

### **FALL - EXTERIOR WOOD**

Look for lifting or peeling paint, splitting wood or areas where the wood grain is separating ("checking"). This is evidence that water is getting into or behind he the siding. Find out how the water is gaining access and fix it before winter arrives.

### **FALL - 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 or has chips out of its surface, this allows water to get in and seep into walls and around windows and doors. Hire a professional to correct the problem.

Trim look for peeling paint on the fascia boards, windowsills and sashes that could allow water in to form mildew and fungus on the interior of your home behind curtains, blinds and window coverings.

If you have better things to do call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

### **FALL - TRIM**

Look for peeling paint on the fascia boards, windowsills and sashes that could allow water in to form mildew and fungus on the interior of your home behind curtains, blinds and window coverings. Patch and pain it now. If you want to relax on your day off call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

### **SPRING - PIPES**

Remove insulation around outdoor water pipes that had been winterized.

Check for leaking around the outside hose bibs and evidence of rust or white lime deposits that may indicate a leak is starting, and replace if necessary.

### **SPRING - ROOF**

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.

If you see significant damage or wear, contact a roofing specialist to give you a bid on a roof replacement. Check eaves, and soffit for signs of water damage, or deteriorating paint.

Repair, repaint or consider wrapping with maintenance-free vinyl or aluminum soffit and fascia.

### **SPRING - SIDING**

Inspect siding (especially on the south and storm sides of the house) for evidence of deterioration, including cracks, splintering, decay, and insect damage; clean, treat and repair as needed.

Remember, 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.

Brick and stone check joints between wood and masonry. Waterproof, repair or repoint if necessary. On 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. Hire a painting service if the damage is severe.

### **SPRING - 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. If this is the case, have your stucco professionally repaired. If you have better things to do call Handyman Central at 973-627-7398.

### **SPRING - TRIM**

Look for peeling paint on the fascia boards, windowsills and sashes that could allow water in to form mildew and fungus on the interior of your home behind curtains, blinds and window coverings. Consider installing maintenance free vinyl or aluminum trim.

### **SPRING - SPRINKLERS**

Check lawn sprinklers system for broken heads, leaky valves and exposed lines and contact a sprinklers service if necessary.

### **SPRING - WATER WELL**

Consider having well water tested for safety at least once a year.



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