

HOME MAINTENANCE TIPS

Provided by Ellis County Home Inspections

Very few things in a home are maintenance free and regular maintenance is the key to maintaining your home for top performance, long life, and lower repair costs. If you do not feel comfortable performing some of the home maintenance tasks listed below, you may want to consider hiring a qualified handy person to help you.

FOUNDATION CARE

Most of the North Texas area soil is expansive type clay. Therefore, proper care of your home's foundation is very important in preserving the integrity of the structure. Clay soils have the ability to expand (when wet) and contract (when dry) at alarming rates. This requires that an EVEN and rather constant level of moisture be maintained around the ENTIRE house. Defects in foundations occur when the structure does not move as a unit. This could occur when one area around the foundation is continually wet, while other areas remain dry. Listed below are a few suggestions that may be helpful in your foundation maintenance program.

1. Maintain the grading and the beds around the foundation so that it gently slopes AWAY from the structure.
2. If the house has guttering, be sure that all run-off is diverted well away (3 or more feet) from the foundation.
3. The area around the foundation should always be watered evenly around the ENTIRE structure.
4. The best way to ensure even watering is to place **soaker hoses** around the entire perimeter and to water EVENLY every time. Do not place the soaker hose directly against the foundation. The soaker hose should be placed approximately 12 inches away from the foundation wall.
5. Do not let water stand next to the foundation.
6. Never allow the soil to dry to the point of cracking or pulling away from the foundation.
7. Do not over water. (It may be necessary to consult a soils and/or foundation engineer to determine the exact amount of watering that is necessary for your particular foundation and soil type.)

ONE TIME TASKS

1. Repair or correct any safety hazards that were noted in your inspection report.
2. Determine fire escape routes for the entire family. It would also be a good idea to practice these escape routes twice a year. More than just remembering what to do, "fire drills" may also expose conditions that may hinder escape, such as a window that will not open easily, or trees/shrubs that have overgrown windows preventing escape, etc.
3. Locate the main circuit breaker in the electrical panel box, main gas shut off, and main water cutoff and show family members how to turn them off in case of emergency.
4. Make sure a fire extinguisher is accessible, check that it is fully charged, and make sure that family members know how to use it in case of emergency.

MONTHLY

1. Change air filters in AC and heating units.
2. Check and clean oven range hood filters if you have a filter type range hood. Placing these filters in the dishwasher is a good method of cleaning them.
3. Make sure air vents (inside and outside) are not blocked. Furniture, blankets, etc. may block inside air vents. Leaves, snow, bird's nests, etc. may block outside vents.
4. Test the ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI's) by pushing the test button, which should then cause the power to go off to these receptacles. Press the reset button to regain power.
5. Check the house for safety hazards such as loose handrails, tripping hazards, etc.
6. If you have a plumbing fixture that is not used frequently, for example, a laundry tub or spare bathroom, run some water briefly to keep water in the trap. This will help prevent sewer gas from entering your home via these fixtures.

SPRING

1. Clean out rain gutters and check gutters for loose joints and secure attachment to your home.
2. Clean coil fins on outdoor air-conditioning unit by spraying it down with water. Do not use such high pressure as to bend or damage fins.
3. After consulting your water heater owner's manual, carefully test the temperature and pressure relief valve (TPRV) to ensure it is not stuck. (Caution: This should release hot water that should be directed to outside the house. If your TPRV does not have proper piping connected to it, consult a qualified plumber.)
4. Have your fireplace or wood stove and chimney cleaned and serviced. Chimney sweeps can also clean out your dryer vent.
5. Turn off gas furnace and fireplace pilot lights where possible.
6. Check smoke, carbon monoxide and security alarms and replace batteries. Many people do this when they set their clocks for daylight savings time. This may also be a good time to practice family "fire drills."
7. Repair and paint fences as necessary.
8. Inspect attic for signs of water penetration. Make sure attic vents are clear from obstructions.
9. Test plumbing shut-off valves to ensure they are working and to prevent them from seizing.
10. Check all plumbing fixtures for leaks. Check under sinks, behind toilets, etc.

SUMMER

1. Vacuum bathroom fan grille.
2. Disconnect the duct connected to the dryer and vacuum lint from in and around the duct.
3. Clean coil fins on outdoor air-conditioning unit by spraying it down with water. Do not use such high pressure as to bend or damage fins.
4. Check and replace damaged caulking and weather-stripping around windows and doorways, including the doorway between the garage and the house.
5. Lubricate door hinges and tighten screws as needed.
6. Lubricate garage door hardware, rollers, and automatic garage door opener chain.
7. Check that the auto-reverse mechanism on your garage door is functioning properly.
8. If your electrical service lines enter your home from overhead, inspect the lines for secure attachment where they enter your house, and make sure there is no water leakage into the

house along the electrical conduit. You should also inspect the cable sheathing to insure that it is not cracking or splitting off and that no conductor wires are exposed.

9. Check exterior wood siding and trim for signs of deterioration; clean, replace or refinish as needed.
10. Trim any trees back that may be touching or soon could be touching your house. Also, keep trees and shrubs cut back away from your outdoor AC unit.
11. Climb on your roof, or use binoculars, to check the general condition of your roof and it's flashings. Significant signs of roof wear should be repaired before it starts to leak.

FALL

1. Have furnace/AC system serviced by a qualified service professional.
2. Remove the grilles on forced air systems and vacuum inside the ducts.
3. After consulting your water heater owner's manual, carefully test the temperature and pressure relief valve (TPRV) to ensure it is not stuck. (Caution: This should release hot water that should be directed to outside the house. If your TPRV does not have proper piping connected to it, consult a qualified plumber.)
4. After consulting your water heater owner's manual, drain off a dishpan full of water from the clean-out valve at the bottom of the tank to control sediment and maintain efficiency.
5. Check smoke, carbon monoxide and security alarms and replace batteries. Many people do this when they set their clocks for daylight savings time. This may also be a good time to practice family "fire drills."
6. Clean out rain gutters and check gutters for loose joints and secure attachment to your home.
7. Before winter, drain and store outdoor hoses. Water hoses left connected through a freeze can cause your outdoor hose bib to crack and leak.
8. Inspect attic for signs of water penetration. Make sure attic vents are clear from obstructions.
9. Test plumbing shut-off valves to ensure they are working and to prevent them from seizing.

WINTER

1. Vacuum bathroom fan grille.
2. Vacuum fire and smoke detectors, as dust or spider webs can prevent them from functioning.
3. Vacuum radiator grilles on the back of refrigerators and freezers.

AS NEEDED

1. Replace washers on dripping faucets.
2. Lubricate sliding doors and windows with silicone spray to ensure smooth operation.
3. Repair and/or re-caulk around bathtubs and shower stalls if you see any signs of cracking or separation where water could get through.
1. Visually check your roof for any damage after particularly strong storms or winds. Have repairs performed by a reputable roofing contractor.
2. Be aware of any cracks in your walls (inside or outside) or foundation and monitor them for movement. If these cracks continue to grow, it may indicate foundation problems that may need to be corrected.

OTHER SYSTEMS

1. If you have a septic tank, it is recommended that you have it cleaned out at least once every three years. If you have and use a garbage disposal on a house with a septic tank, it is recommended that you have the septic tank cleaned out once a year.
2. If you have well water, it is recommended that you test for bacteria every six months.

OTHER TIPS

1. "Draino" drain cleaner is great for plastic or PVC pipe, but do NOT use it if you have metal drainpipes. It will eventually eat through the metal pipe and cause a leak. (repairs can be expensive.) If you have metal (usually cast iron) drain pipes that get clogged, call a plumber.
2. If mildew starts to grow on the north side of your home, it can be killed and cleaned off with a mixture of 1 part bleach with 3 parts water.
3. Signs of mold or mildew in your dishwasher or "Jacuzzi" tub can be cleaned by running a bottle of vinegar that will mix with the water through the system.
4. If your waste disposal smells bad, slicing up a lemon and running it through your disposal with plenty of ice should clean it nicely.
5. Store firewood or other wood away from the house to discourage termites.

LAWN CARE

1. It is best to water in the mornings. (very early)
2. Most lawns perform well with approximately 1-inch of water per week.
3. It is best to mow in the evenings.
4. You should not mow wet grass.
5. It is best to stop weeds in the early fall or early spring with weed killer. (Follow manufacturer's instructions)
6. Fertilize a new lawn with a 12-12-12-fertilizer ratio. Fertilize established lawns with a 3-1-2 ratio. (Follow manufacturer's instructions)

DISCLAIMER

The information above is provided to attempt to inform new homeowners about general home maintenance. The maintenance suggestions listed above are by no means a complete list of all items that need maintenance in every home. The statements above are only a compilation of maintenance suggestions based on our experience in the business of real estate property. ECHI assumes no responsibility for any consequence arising from use of the information, materials and techniques described.

We hope you enjoy your new home!

This information has been provided to you by:

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