



## Home Maintenance Guidelines\*

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### Checklist – Fall\*

#### 1) **Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors:**

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

#### 2) **Clean Carpeting, Upholstery, Draperies and Air Ducts:**

- a) 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.
- b) 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.

#### 3) **Drain-Waste and Vent System:**

- a) Flush out system.

#### 4) **Heating:**

- a) Forced warm air heating system
  - i) 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:
    - (1) Inspect thermostat for proper operation.
    - (2) Inspect filter and change or clean as needed.
    - (3) Check all electrical components and controls.
    - (4) Oil motors as needed.
    - (5) Inspect heat exchanger for possible cracks, which would introduce carbon monoxide into the living space.
    - (6) Check air flow. If diminished, it may be necessary to clean the evaporator coil and ductwork.
    - (7) Check air fuel mixture, where appropriate.

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- b) Gas burner
  - i) Clean burners and ports, or have them professionally cleaned.
- c) Oil burner
  - i) Have your oil burner professionally serviced; lubricate fan and motor bearings.
- d) Thermostat
  - i) Clean heat sensor, contact points, and contacts; check accuracy and have professionally replaced if necessary.
- e) Heat Pump
  - i) 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.
- f) Hot-water heating system
  - i) 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.
- g) Oil-fired boilers
  - i) 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.

### 5) Door and Window Weather-stripping:

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

### 6) Fireplace and Chimneys:

- a) The most important maintenance to do regularly is to have a pro clean your flue liners or vents in order to prevent the buildup of creosote.
- b) 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.
- c) Water leaks can also cause the mortar to deteriorate prematurely.
- d) Consider installing a chimney cap to protect your chimney from water, debris, and critters.

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### 7) Storm Windows and Doors:

- a) 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.
- b) Consider installing dual pane thermal windows to eliminate all need to remove or replace storm windows.

### 8) Garage Doors:

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

### 9) Pest Control:

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

### 10) Water Heater:

- a) Every six months you should turn off the power source and drain it completely until it's clear of sediment.
- b) Also inspect flue assembly (gas heater); check for leaks and corrosion.
- c) Consult a service professional if any damage is evident.

### 11) Exterior Caulking:

- a) Inspect caulking around exterior doors and windows. Replace if necessary.

### 12) Basement and Foundation:

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

### 13) Decks and Other Exterior Wood:

- a) Inspect exterior wood for cracks, splintering, decay, and insect damage; treat and repair as needed.
- b) Keep decks clean, removing wet leaves and debris that can cause staining or encourage wood decay, mold and mildew growth.
- c) Having your deck professionally cleaned and sealed can add years to its life.
- d) Repair hinges and latches on your gates.

### 14) Gutters and Downspouts:

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- a) 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.
- b) 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.

### 15) Landscaping:

- a) Cut back any trees or shrubs that touching the exterior.
- b) 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.
- c) If you're overwhelmed, a contact a service professional.
- d) Prior to the first frost, shut off irrigation system and blow out all irrigation lines to prevent them from freezing.

### 16) Pipes:

- a) Check your pipes for rust or white lime deposits that may indicate a leak is starting - replace if necessary.
- b) Check for leaking around the outside hose bibs.
- c) Install insulation around outdoor water pipes to protect from freezing.
- d) Prior to the first frost,
  - i) Disconnect and remove all hoses and other attachments from hose bibs
  - ii) Shut off water supply to all outside showers and drain down or "blow out" completely

### 17) Roof:

- a) Check for warping, aging, moss, and cracking, making sure that shingles, shakes or tiles are sound; repair or replace as needed.
- b) Inspect the flashing around chimneys, skylights and vents.
- c) Seal cracks or openings where water could penetrate.
- d) If you see significant damage or wear, consider contacting a roofing specialist to give you a bid on a roof replacement.
- e) Do NOT cover air vents or turbines.

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### 18) Siding:

- a) **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.
- b) 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.
- c) **Brick and stone:** check joints between wood and masonry. Waterproof, repair or repaint if necessary.
- d) **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.
- e) **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.
- f) **Trim:** look for peeling paint on the fascia boards, window sills 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.

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