

SPRING into Action

It is safe to say that you have heard of "spring cleaning." Although it can be a hassle when all you want to do is soak up the rays and start spending time outdoors, taking a few hours to inspect your home each spring can save you a fortune in the future. Choose a specific Saturday during the first month of spring to perform your cleaning and then you can wipe your hands clean of this exhausting chore. Below is a checklist of inspections and cleanings that should be done every spring.



Exterminate Pesky Insects

Insects, rodents and other unwanted house guests tend to find their way in your home where it is warm and dry. Go around your home to find cracks or other points of entry and seal or plug them immediately. Spray around your home to get rid of insects or call an exterminator.



Keep Your Basement Dry

Even if your basement has never flooded or had any leakage problems, go through your basement to check for puddles or musty smells. If you do have a leak somewhere, find the source and resolve the issue as quickly as possible to avoid any further damage. Install a dehumidifier to keep the air dry as well. If there is a large amount of water, consult with companies who can reseal your foundation.



Inspect Your Air-Conditioning Unit

Change your filters, clean your system and ensure the machine is working properly. Rid the condenser of leaves and debris but if the cooling fins are exposed, be careful not to bend them.



Unclog Your Gutters and Downspouts

Even if you cleaned your gutters prior to the wintertime, you should check them out again. Check your gutters for corrosion, joint separation and loose fasteners. Make sure they are ready for spring rains and make sure your downspouts are sloping away from your house. They should also carry the water at least five feet away from the foundation walls to prevent water damage as much as possible.



Weatherproof Windows and Doors

You may need to recaulk or add weather-stripping to the seals on your windows and doors that are not tight enough. This can help reduce your energy bills during the heat of the summer by keeping the cool air in your home.



Examine the Deck

Look for water stains where your deck meets the house. Water damage on your deck can lead to wood decay or weakening of the structure. Get rid of nasty mold and moss by pressure washing your deck.



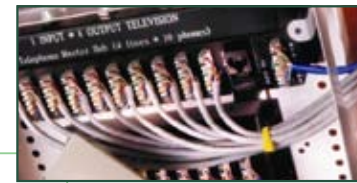
Check Your Roof

Look for cracked, curled or missing shingles. Shingles are fairly durable but make sure to replace them quickly when needed. Shingles in disrepair can lead to leaky roofs. The summer sun can really hurt your shingles so replacing them early on in the spring can prevent severe damage.



Scan Your Attic for Damage

If you are unable to get on your roof to survey any damage that was done during the winter months, then check your attic. Look for vent blockages, damaged soffits and wet spots in the insulation. These can all be signs of a problem on your roof.



Prevent Future Problems

Some other things to consider when completing your spring cleaning checklist:

- When watering your lawn, make sure your sprinkler is not spraying the walls of your home. This is unnecessary moisture that can lead to wall failure and unwanted growths.
- Clean cooking grease from exhaust hood to prevent a stovetop fire.
- Make sure that your water heater is venting properly. Inspect areas around the base of the heater for leaks that may have begun.
- Ensure that all shut-off valves in your home are working properly. Teach all members of your household how to use them.
- Clean out the clothes dryer exhaust duct, damper and space under the dryer to prevent a fire.
- Exposed wires can arc, which produces heat, and can cause a fire. Brittle, or damaged extension cords and power cords should be replaced.



Check Our Your Chimney

Examine the exterior of your chimney as best as possible. Clean the flue and have it inspected by a chimney sweep. Odds are you won't notice any damage until you try to use it next winter.



Look At Your Faucets and Hoses

Winter ice can really harm your faucets. Check them for freeze damage by turning on the water and placing your thumb over the opening. If you can easily stop the water flow, then you probably have a damaged pipe. Be sure to double check that your hoses aren't dry rotted.



Prepare Your Landscaping

Look for low areas in your yard. If it is low enough to cause standing water, it could be a possible breeding area for insects that may carry diseases. Fill these low spots with compacted soil and sprinkle some grass seed on top. Give your lawn equipment a test. Be sure that your cutting blades are sharp and your power equipment is running okay.

Although spring cleaning can be a pain, ensuring that each of the things on the list are done can prevent more time and money being spent in the future. If you want to be extremely thorough, then go through this checklist every six months. You will feel productive and at ease knowing that everything is working properly. If it isn't working properly then at least you can feel safe knowing that you are aware of the issue. Once you are done with all your cleaning and inspecting, grab a cold drink and enjoy the warm weather.