

## Spring Maintenance Tips for Your Home

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### Spring tips

- Replace your furnace filter
- Clean the kitchen exhaust hood and air filter
- Check your electrical system
- Always have a multi-purpose fire extinguisher accessible.
- Make sure the light bulbs in all your fixtures are the correct wattage
- Review your fire escape plan with your family
- Consider installing a lightning protection system on your home
- Protect all your electrical appliances from power surges and lightning
- Have a professional air conditioning contractor inspect and maintain your system as recommended by the manufacturer
- Check for damage to your roof
- Run through a severe-weather drill with your family
- Repair all cracked, broken or uneven driveways and walks to help provide a level walking surface
- Protect your home from sewer or drain back-up losses
- Check all the fascia and trim for deterioration
- Check your water heater
- Check the shutoff valve at each plumbing fixture to make sure they function
- Clean clothes dryer exhaust duct, damper, and space under the dryer
- Replace all extension cords that have become brittle, worn or damaged
- Inspect and clean dust from the covers of your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

### **Replace or clean your furnace filter.**

It should be checked once a month and replaced or cleaned as needed. Some filters are reusable and are supposed to be taken out, washed with a hose and re-inserted. A dirty filter can lower the efficiency of the heating/cooling system, increase heating costs and cause fires.

### **Clean the kitchen exhaust hood and air filter.**

Keeping this clean of cooking grease will help keep a stovetop fire from spreading.

### **Check your electrical system.**

- Look for burn marks at the main electrical panel; they can be a sign of arcing inside the panel, which can easily lead to a fire. Loose connections or damaged insulation can cause the arcing. Note: Only a qualified electrician should remove the front panel cover.
- Trip and reset the circuit breakers regularly.
- Remove any combustible materials such as paper boxes or flammable liquids from the area near the main electrical panel. Sparks caused by arcing inside the panel can ignite material stored nearby.

- Check all electrical outlets for loose-fitting plugs they are an indication of a worn out receptacle. Worn receptacles should be replaced as they cause overheating and fires. Also check electrical outlets and switches to be sure they work properly. If any switches, outlets or receptacles do not work, have a qualified electrician determine the problem and fix it to avoid fires inside the walls of your home.
- Install safety covers to help protect children from electrical shock. Any appliance or tool that gives even the slightest shock should be unplugged and checked by an electrician or repair shop.

**Always have a multi-purpose fire extinguisher accessible.**

Make sure it is Underwriters Laboratories (UL) listed or Factory Mutual (FM) approved. Check the gauges to make sure they are charged and ready to use.

**Make sure the light bulbs in all your fixtures are the correct wattage**

The light fixture manufacturer recommends the correct wattage. If too high a wattage bulb is used in a light fixture, heat produced inside the fixture can lead to fire inside the fixture, ceiling or wall.

**Consider installing a lightning protection system on your home.**

Read more at [Lightning protection systems](#).

**Protect all your electrical appliances from power surges and lightning.**

Read more at [How to choose surge protection for your home](#).

**Have a professional air conditioning contractor inspect and maintain your system as recommended by the manufacturer.**

Maintenance should include:

- Cleaning the evaporator coil
- Lubricating fans and motors
- Tightening or changing the belts
- Checking electrical safeties
- Checking the drain pan for leaks
- Testing the capacitors
- Check the condensate drain
- Test the crankcase heater

- Calibrating the thermostat
  - Visually checking the wiring for potential short circuits
- These steps can help decrease the chance of fire, save money by making the system run more efficiently and help prevent breakdowns.

Things you can maintain:

- Check the condensate hose to be sure it is not blocked with algae.
- Clean the outside condensing unit screen of leaves.
- Listen for unusual noises.

### **Check for damage to your roof**

Signs include missing, curling, cupping, broken or cracked shingles. Pooling or ponds of water that fail to drain from flat roofs may indicate low areas and inadequate drainage.

### **Repair all cracked, broken or uneven driveways and walks to help provide a level walking surface.**

This will help prevent guests and family members from slipping, tripping or falling.

### **Protect your home from sewer or drain back-up losses**

Read more at [Wet Basements](#).

### **Check all the fascia and trim for deterioration.**

These areas can become weathered and worn and may lead to potential water damage.

### **Check your water heater.**

- If you have a gas-fired water heater, check to make sure it is venting properly. Light a match next to the vent and wave it out (don't blow it out). See if the smoke is pulled up into the vent. If it isn't, have a professional inspect and repair it. Otherwise, carbon monoxide and other combustibles can build up in the home.
- Check around the base of your water heater for evidence of leaks. If your water heater is over 5 years old, it should be checked monthly for any leakage or rusting at the bottom. If water leakage or rust is found, the water heater should be replaced.

### **Check the shutoff valve at each plumbing fixture to make sure they function.**

Know the location of all valves and what equipment and water lines they serve.

Teach all family members.

**Clean the clothes dryer exhaust duct, damper and space under the dryer.**

Poor maintenance allows lint to build up in the exhaust duct and cause fire.

**Replace all extension cords that have become brittle, worn or damaged.**

Exposed wires may cause arcing, which will produce heat and can start a fire. Care should also be taken to keep appliances and their power cords away from water or a heat source because this will damage the cord's insulation.

**Inspect and clean dust from the covers of your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.**