

8 steps to protect your investment



Eight Steps Protect Your Investment

Along with the many joys of home ownership, there are important upkeep responsibilities. After you move in, take some time to address the list of tasks below, and be sure to include them on your yearly calendar.

The most important jobs are those that ensure the long term protection of your home, such as keeping moisture out of the house, preventing fires and keeping your high-priced furnace running safely and efficiently. Don't make the mistake of underestimating the importance of these tasks. You can solve problems today for just a few dollars that might otherwise cost tens of thousands down the road.

Monthly Tasks

1

Check your furnace filters. Furnace filters are used to trap dust, pollen, spores and airborne debris, keeping the air in your home clean and extending the life of your furnace. Simply check your furnace's instruction manual to locate and remove the filter. If it appears dirty with a dark tint, replace it with a new one. Clean air is especially important for people with allergies. In such cases, you may consider having an electronic air cleaner professionally installed.

Biannual Tasks

2

Take care of your garbage disposal. Garbage disposals can be handy in the kitchen, but they are susceptible to wearing down and breaking. Try this little tip a couple times per year. Instead of using caustic and poisonous drain cleaners, pour a cup of vinegar into an ice cube tray. After it's frozen put the cubes into the disposal and turn it on. The vinegar removes the grease and build-up of gunk and the cubes help scrub the disposal itself. Disposals are easily choked, so keep heavier materials like potato peels and eggshells out.

3

Clean your gutters. You may need to do this task more than twice per year, depending on the amount of trees and leaves around your home. When leaves and pine needles clog your gutters and drainpipes, rain water builds up and can't be properly drained. As a result, water gathers around the foundation of your home and in the crawl space, creating the potential for mold and mildew problems and rotting house supports. Use a garden trowel or your hands to muck out the debris from a stable ladder. Or just hire someone to do it for you.

4

Check your roof. Sometimes water dams up behind debris on the roof, especially within your roof's valleys. This can cause water to seep under the roofing materials and ultimately end up within cavities between walls, rotting wood and putting your home in danger of mold. Check your roof for any signs of water build up and loose or damaged shingles. Also examine the vent pipes, skylights and chimneys for any signs of rusting or separation that might allow water in the home.

Annual Tasks

5

Caulk windows and trim. Every home needs fresh caulking to fill gaps and cracks. Doing this task annually prevents moisture from entering your walls, causing damage to your home and increasing the chances of mold and other problems. Check for cracks in the trim around the windows and siding of your house, roof vents, skylights, outdoor faucets and where gas pipes and electrical lines enter the house. Also, while you're at it, make sure to check the caulking inside the house around the bathtub and sinks. To caulk, simply clean the surface of the area and use a caulking gun to force the caulk out of the tube.

6

Inspect your crawl space. When unwanted water makes its way into your home, it will sometimes make its way to the crawl space. Checking the space after the rain season has already begun can help you identify if there's a leak happening somewhere. Locate the trapdoor and crawl into the space wearing work clothes and carrying a

flashlight, or hire someone to do it for you. If you see any accumulation of water, contact a home inspector for help.

7

Touch up your exterior paint. You might think painting is all about making your house look nice, but that's not entirely true. Paint plays an important role to prevent damage and rusting to exterior siding, gutters and overhangs. When the weather is good, take a look around the outside of your house for paint that has bubbled, blistered, peeled, or cracked. If you locate a problem, you know the routine. Get out the old paint scraper and clean the existing paint away from the surface. Then blend the primer and/or new paint in with a dry brush.

8

Service your furnace. Most people forget about their furnace as long as the heat keeps pumping through the house. However, furnaces are expensive items to replace and use a lot of fuel. Making sure it's working properly and efficiently is one thing you don't want to let slip. Call the company that installed your furnace or contact a local specialist to have your furnace inspected and serviced each year.

