

Maintenance

At some stage - just about everything on or in your home will need replacement or maintenance. Despite our best efforts with new materials - actually there's no such thing as "maintenance free". This is especially true if you happen to live in a geographic area where there's a significant temperature swing - summer to winter.

A good rule of thumb is to allow about one per cent of your purchase price, per year for maintenance.

These notes are intended as a guide to ensure that major items receive adequate attention. It is not a comprehensive list of all maintenance matters for all buildings.

Most people carry out maintenance in the Spring and Fall. In many areas, the summer's too hot and/or the winter's too cold to do anything but the most pressing repairs.

Exterior

Grading - ensure that all grading (which includes patios, drives, walkways and so on) slopes away from the foundation walls and any structural posts or columns, for at least the first five or six feet. All grading must be at least six inches below any brick or stone veneer and at least eight inches below any siding.

Window wells - remove debris and foliage. Ensure that the stone in the bottom is at least six to eight inches below the window sill. See the diagram in the exterior section for full details.

Eavestroughs and downspouts - must discharge at least six feet from foundation walls or any other structural elements. Clean out gutters and repair any winter damage.

Bricks/stone/siding/stucco - repair any damage. Paint and caulk. Repair or replace any damaged areas especially where underlying sheathing or framing is exposed.

Windows - paint and caulk as required. Replace any rotted sections. Pay particular attention to the miter joints of clad windows.

Doors - paint and caulk as required. Seal the panels of wood garage doors, inside and out. Check automatic door openers run smoothly and that the safety auto reverse sensor(s) work. Lubricate all door tracks, wheels and hinges. Repairing garage door springs is a job for an expert. The long, coiled, horizontal springs are under significant tension and may seriously injure you if they let go unexpectedly. Check all patio doors and screens for smooth operation and adjust where necessary.

Roof - check shingles are secure and that none are missing or damaged. Check flat roofs for adequate gravel cover, blisters or exposed tar. Check all roof flashings are secure and well sealed.

Chimneys and flue pipes - have chimneys professionally cleaned. Check caps and flashings are sealed and secure. Clay liners deteriorate over time, especially in very cold climates - replace any damaged units.

Maintenance (2)

Trim trees - away from roofs and outbuildings. Cut back vines so that they are at least three feet from soffits, fascias and chimneys.

Cracks in foundation walls - are not all major structural issues, however all will deteriorate and may leak if left unattended. Seal all cracks in foundation walls and monitor the area(s) for moisture entry and/or further movement. Professional repairs for all foundation cracks are highly recommended.

Driveways, paths and patios - repair cracks and other damaged concrete or asphalt, re-set any loose patio stones or interlock. Ensure that all driveways (as far as possible) and all paths and patios, slope away from the building walls. Clean out driveway drains.

Walkouts - clean out drains, ensure that any retaining wall weep holes are clear and draining.

Retaining walls, fences and gates - repair fences and gates. Paint or re-stain about every three years. Re-set any posts heaved by frost. Repair retaining walls ensuring they lean away from the void, clean out weep holes and ensure any walls above two feet have safety railings.

Interior

Basements and crawl spaces - check for signs of water penetration or cracks. Look for mold and mildew in damp areas as well as efflorescence (the white powdery deposit found on walls and floors). Check especially behind storage areas, wood stacks and areas behind large pieces of furniture.

Cold stores are often poorly ventilated - opening the door into the basement for a few days can help to exchange the air. Open up any available wall vents.

Crawl spaces must be vented - often wall vents are closed for the winter - open them in spring to allow fresh air throughout the enclosed spaces.

Check operation of all sump pumps and ensure that the discharge pipes are clear of debris and at least six feet from any foundation walls or other structural elements.

Electrical panel - check for water penetration and rust. Ensure fuses are fitted tightly and that any visible aluminum wiring is not corroded. Check for loose or poorly supported wiring - most commonly found in basements and garages. Secure loose wires with appropriate clips.

You must employ a qualified electrician for any electrical repairs unless you are certain how to proceed.

We recommend qualified electricians be used for all electrical repairs, additions and upgrades.

faucet's and shower heads - replace any washers at leaking taps, clean filters with a liquid descaler to reduce bacteria and ensure good water flow.

Maintenance (3)

Check and replace any defective or cracked bathtub or sink/basin caulking.

Toilets that run continuously need adjustment or new mechanisms.

Furnaces and boilers, heat pumps and air conditioning units - must be cleaned and serviced annually. **We strongly recommend annual service/maintenance agreements which cover the cost of most repairs.**

Renew missing insulation on air conditioning pipes and seal all pipes where they pass through the house wall. Clear bushes and other foliage that block air conditioning fins.

In cold climates, cover the top of air conditioning units with plywood to keep snow off the fan blades. The plastic covers available are not recommended as they tend to hold moisture inside, promoting rust.

Check all boiler pumps, radiators, reservoirs and pipes for leaks. Some pumps need regular lubrication.

Attics and crawl spaces - inspect these areas for squirrels or other uninvited guests. Check for leakage, mildew or other water damage, especially near flashings, soffits and around chimneys and other roof or wall penetrations.

Rake loose insulation level and ensure that soffit vents are not obstructed.

Monthly

Check ground and arc fault circuit interrupters at outlets and at the electrical panel.

Clean whirlpool tubs.

Check, clean or replace furnace or heat pump air filters.

Check operation of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.