



Helpful Hints for Good Fall Home Maintenance

Seasonal chores will help keep your home in great shape

As each year goes by, your house ages as a result of being lived in as well as from the changing outside temperatures (hotter and colder) and weather conditions (rain and wind). In order to keep all the components of your home running smoothly and to avoid costly repairs later, it's helpful to conduct a few maintenance chores each season.

- ❑ **Seal drafty windows and doors.** You can save 10 percent or more on your energy bill by reducing air leaks in your home, so take a look around for drafts around doors and windows and seal those you find. An easy way to do this is to move a lighter around the window or door frame and see if the flame moves with a breeze. If you find a window leak, caulk it. If you're unable to repair the leak around a window frame, you can buy a plastic sealing kit that can be placed on the outside of the window to prevent air from getting in. For drafty doors, install or replace damaged weather stripping to ensure a weather tight seal.
- ❑ **Clean and store seasonal outdoor furniture.** Wash outdoor furniture and cushions. Once dry, store cushions in dry area to prevent cracking, and fading over the fall and winter months. When spring comes again, you'll be pleased that they're clean and ready for use!
- ❑ **Prepare your fireplace for the upcoming winter months.** If you use your fireplace regularly during the winter, make sure you have the chimney cleaned, inspected and repaired (as needed) by a professional chimney cleaner before starting the first fire. All chimneys should be checked out at least once a year prior to use to look for any damage and to have it cleaned. This maintenance will prevent possible chimney fires and it costs less than \$200 for the service. Check the damper handle and springs to ensure the flue is working correctly.
- ❑ **Test and replenish smoke/CO detectors.** Make sure all smoke and CO detectors and security systems are working properly. Replace batteries if needed.
- ❑ **Make sure the outside is well lit.** With dark days ahead, exterior lighting is very important. Check all your bulbs and consider using timers to turn lights on at dusk and off in the morning.
- ❑ **Drain the sprinkler system.** Your sprinkler service will charge \$50 to \$150 to winterize your system.
- ❑ **Fertilize and reseed your lawn.** Although grass appears to stop growing in the fall, the roots are actually growing deeper to prepare for winter. You'll also want to prune your trees and shrubs after the leaves turn to encourage healthy growth in the spring.
- ❑ **Paint exterior wood components, such as siding, trim and railings.** Where paint is cracked or worn away, be sure to repaint to properly protect the wood from moisture and wood rot.
- ❑ **Clean out the gutters.** Then, during the next good rain, check to see how the water drains away from your home. If it isn't draining away quickly, you'll want to extend the downspouts at least three feet away from the foundation.
- ❑ **Have your heating system serviced to make sure its working as it should.** Change the air filters in the return registers, ideally once a month. If you have a window air conditioning unit, remove it from the window or place a waterproof cover over it to prevent damage.
- ❑ **Fall is a good time to do some indoor painting.** The weather will still be warm enough outside to leave windows open to ventilate during painting. After painting is done, make sure your leftover paint is stored in a heated area of your home, like a garage, to prevent it from freezing.

