



Protecting Your Home – The Biggest Investment of Your Life – Part II

Our spring newsletter was met with great enthusiasm. Accordingly, I am providing you with a fall and winter “to do list” with respect to readying your home for winter. The following information is based on the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation website with respect to maintenance. I hope you will find this information useful. Move to the top of the list any item that will prevent moisture penetration into your home. Moisture causes many problems and potentially major damage. Please feel free to share this information with clients, family and friends.

Fall

If it wasn't serviced in the spring, have furnace or heating system serviced by a qualified service company. This should be done every two years for a gas furnace, and every year for an oil furnace, or as recommended by the manufacturer.

If you have central air conditioning, make sure the drain pan under the cooling coil mounted in the furnace plenum is draining properly and is clean.

Lubricate circulating pump on hot water heating system.

Bleed air from hot water radiators.

Disconnect the power to the furnace and examine the forced air furnace fan belt, if installed, for wear, looseness or noise; clean fan blades of any dirt build up.

Check chimneys for obstructions such as a nest before turning on your furnace.

Vacuum electric baseboard heaters to remove dust.

Remove the grilles on forced air systems and vacuum inside the ducts.

Turn ON gas furnace pilot light (if your furnace has one), set the thermostat to “heat” and test the furnace for proper operation by raising the thermostat setting until the furnace starts to operate. Once you have confirmed proper operation, return the thermostat to the desired setting.

Check and clean or replace furnace air filters each month during the heating season. Ventilation system, such as heat recovery ventilator, filters should be checked every two months.

Check to see that the ductwork leading to and from the heat recovery ventilator is in good shape, the joints are tightly sealed (aluminum tape) and any duct insulation and plastic duct wrap is free of tears and holes.

If the heat recovery ventilator has been shut off for the summer, clean the filters and the core, and pour water down the condensate drain to test it.

Check to see that bathroom exhaust fans and range hoods are operating properly. If possible, confirm that you are getting good airflow by observing the outside vent hood (the exterior damper should be held open by the airflow).

Check smoke, carbon monoxide and security alarms, and replace batteries. If the unit is more than ten years old – replace it.

Clean portable humidifier, if one is used.

Check sump pump and line to ensure proper operation, and to ascertain that there are no line obstructions or visible leaks.

Install storm windows.

Remove interior insect screens from windows to allow air from the heating system to keep condensation off window glass and to allow more free solar energy into your home.

Ensure windows and skylights close tightly; repair or replace weatherstripping, as needed.

Ensure all doors to the outside shut tightly, and check other doors for ease of use. Replace door weatherstripping if required.

If there is a door between your house and the garage, check the adjustment of the self-closing device to ensure it closes the door completely.

Cover outside air-conditioning units and shut off power.

Ensure that the ground around your home slopes away from the foundation wall, so that water does not drain into your basement.

Clean leaves from eavestroughs and roof, and test downspouts to ensure proper drainage from the roof.

Drain and store outdoor hoses. Close interior valve to outdoor hose connection and drain the hose bib (exterior faucet), unless your house has frostproof hose bibs.

Have well water tested for quality. It is recommended that you test for bacteria every six months.

If you have a septic tank, measure the sludge and scum to determine if the tank needs to be emptied before the spring. It is recommended that cottage owners do this in the spring, rather than in the fall. Tanks should be pumped out at least once every three to five years.

Winterize landscaping, for example, store outdoor furniture, prepare gardens and, if necessary, protect young trees or bushes for winter.

Winter

Check and clean or replace furnace air filters each month during the heating season. Ventilation system, such as heat recovery ventilator, filters should be checked every two months.

After consulting your hot water tank owner's manual, drain off a dishpan full of water from the clean-out valve at the bottom of your hot water tank to control sediment and maintain efficiency.

Clean humidifier two or three times during the winter season.

Vacuum bathroom fan grille.

Vacuum fire and smoke detectors, as dust or spider webs can prevent them from functioning.

Vacuum radiator grilles on back of refrigerators and freezers, and empty and clean drip trays.

Check pressure gauge on all fire extinguishers; recharge or replace if necessary.

Check fire escape routes, door and window locks and hardware, and lighting around outside of house; ensure family has good security habits.

Check the basement floor drain to ensure the trap contains water; refill with water if necessary.

Monitor your home for excessive moisture levels—for example, condensation on your windows which can cause significant damage over time and pose serious health problems—and take corrective action if necessary. Check all faucets for signs of dripping and change washers as needed. Faucets requiring frequent replacement of washers may be in need of repair.

If you have a plumbing fixture that is not used frequently, such as a laundry tub or spare bathroom sink, tub or shower stall, run some water briefly to keep water in the trap.

Clean drains in dishwasher, sinks, bathtubs and shower stalls.

Test plumbing shut-off valves to ensure they are working and to prevent them from seizing.

Examine windows and doors for ice accumulation or cold air leaks. If found repair now. If this is not possible, make a note to repair or replace in the spring.

Examine attic for frost accumulation. Check roof for ice dams or icicles. If there is excessive frost or staining of the underside of the roof, or ice dams on the roof surface, consult a specialist.

Keep snow clear of gas meters, gas appliance vents, exhaust vents and basement windows.

Monitor outdoor vents, gas meters and chimneys for ice and snow buildup. Consult with an appropriate contractor or your gas utility for information on how to safely deal with any ice problems you may discover.

Check electrical cords, plugs and outlets for all indoor and outdoor seasonal lights to ensure fire safety; if worn, or if plugs or cords feel warm to the touch, replace immediately.

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