

Home Maintenance tips for Spring

Spring has arrived and although it's not as warm as some of us would like, we are still counting our blessings that it's rain and not snow falling from the sky – sorry Eastern Canada, we know it will stop snowing over there soon, probably. As the increase in temperatures has you setting aside your winter wear for more seasonally - appropriate garb, it's equally important to make sure your home is ready for the change in weather.

Consider the following ways to maintain your home for spring. Some of these items will fall under some simple spring cleaning, and some are more safety - oriented. We'd encourage homeowners to approach each task with the same enthusiasm, as we often see safety items overlooked for other chores, and then ultimately forgotten.

Exterior

Check your Gutters & Downspouts



As you perform maintenance around your home this weekend, take some time for **gutter cleaning** to ensure your gutters and downspouts are clear of leaves, twigs, or excess snow, so water can effectively drain through them. The extreme snow, wind, and ice storms we experienced this winter may have rendered your gutters and downspouts ineffective – either breaking or moving them or filling them with debris. While checking your gutters, look at your downspouts to see if they've suffered any damage. They should extend at least six feet from your home, so that they can effectively direct water away from your foundation.

Keep your Window Wells Free of Debris



Water and debris can get trapped in your **window wells**, allowing moisture to intrude into your basement. Clear out any debris, and to avoid this in the future, a clear plastic dome can be installed over the window well to keep water and debris out.

Assess your Roof



Roofs take the brunt of winter weather abuse. Now that your roof is free of ice and snow, it's a great opportunity to see what condition it is in.

Roofing can be damaged by hail, raccoons, or other animals, and should be regularly inspected by a professional. Localized repairs are often an option, but **as a general rule, when more than 10% to 15% of the roof requires repairs, it is best to replace the roof covering.**

It's important to know that roofs do not last forever. As roof materials grow old, they lose their ability to keep water out of the house. Asphalt and wood roofing can crack, curl, and shrink. Wood roofing rots, or burns through from the sun. Shingles, or tiles may fall off as the materials or fasteners deteriorate. By knowing the signs of potential problems, you can have a professional complete necessary **roof repair** or replacements without the major costs associated with water damage.

Ensure your Home has Proper Lot Grading

No foundation wall system is completely waterproof. Water accumulating in the soil outside your home will leak through eventually. To combat this, it is essential to keep the soil outside your home dry. Achieving dry soil can be done by ensuring the ground around your home slopes away from your home, rather than towards it. The ground around the home should slope down six inches for the first ten feet away from the home; this can often be achieved by adding topsoil. The theory is simple – if there's no water in the soil on the outside of the foundation wall, no water will get into the interior.

Interior

Test your Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Detectors



We recommend testing your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on a monthly basis and changing these devices' batteries every year (at your birthday!!). You should have at least one smoke alarm on every floor of your home, although having more is encouraged. When testing to make sure your smoke detector is working, check the expiry date printed on the smoke detector. If the unit is past this date, or if it is more than ten years old, it should be replaced. *If there is no expiry date, it's probably more than ten years old.*

Not every home comes equipped with a **carbon monoxide detector**, which means you might not have one. If you don't have one, it's not only a good idea to get one. Carbon monoxide detectors help to protect homeowners from the dangers related to carbon monoxide poisoning. If your detector finds there is an unsafe level of carbon monoxide in your home it will notify you in a manner similar to a smoke detector: loud beeping. And like a smoke alarm, it requires the same degree of regular maintenance, so check your carbon monoxide detector on a monthly basis, change its batteries every year, and check the expiry date. *Carbon monoxide detectors often have only a seven-year life span.*

Check your Furnace & Air Conditioner Filters



Do you know **how often to change a furnace filter**? Your furnace and air conditioner filters should be checked every 3 months to determine if they need cleaning or changing. Typically located in the air return duct adjacent to the furnace, making sure your furnace filter is in good condition can help improve both comfort and heating costs. You will need to see if you should purchase a cleanable or disposable furnace filter – most homeowners choose to have a disposable filter, for convenience, but both are good choices. Furnace filters generally range from \$5 to \$30 depending on the type of filter you select.

Helpful tip: *Note the size of your filter before heading out to buy a new one.*

Good luck to all the homeowners starting their spring cleaning projects! We know that for many it can be a dreaded chore, but it means we're that much closer to summertime lounging.